

Minutes

WPG/22/M3

Group meeting

Held on 16 November, virtually through MS Teams

Chair:	Andrew Jackson	HELOA
Attendees:	Cliona O'Neill	HEFCW
	Chris Laity	Universities Wales
	Dafydd Trystan	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
	Lesley Jones	St Cyres School
	Lisa Bowen	Cardiff Metropolitan University
	Ruth Williams-Sharp	Cardiff University
	Nerys Bourne	Careers Wales
	Leslie McDowell	SLC
	Jon Jones	Henry Tudor School
	Sharon James	Cardiff and Vale Group
	Ronan Cullen	Ulster University
	Jane Houston	The Children's Commissioner for Wales
	Nicola Hunt	HEFCW
	Robert Evans	Qualification Wales
Apologies:	Alison Bryant	Welsh Government
	Chris Williams	Welsh Government
	Eithne Hughes	ASCL Wales
	Julie Elliott	Seren Network
	Andy Phillips	Wrexham Glyndwr University
	Mike James	Cardiff and Vale Group
	Steven Minney	Swansea University
	Maxine Thomas	Pembrokeshire college
	Troy Ford	SLC
UCAS in attendance:	Ange James	Service Delivery Officer (Results)
	Carys Willgoss	Senior Policy Adviser
	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Co-Ordinator
	Holly Brown	Policy Advisor
	Georgia Marks	Public Affairs Adviser
	Ange James	Service Delivery Officer (Results)
	Aled Leaver	Data Collection Support Officer

Presenting: Haleema Masud Policy Adviser

A2/22/ 01 Welcome and apologies

The Policy Group was welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted. The group members introduced themselves.

A2/22/ 02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting. It was noticed that Laura Hawkins has recently joined as Customer Engagement Coordinator at UCAS and will be supporting the administration of the group.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

The action to discuss how students are supported outside HE will be addressed at the next Council Meeting in Bath on the 1st December.

Career Wales mentioned lack of resources to offer support to sixth form colleges or schools to access and support from HELOA in this regard. This will be explored further before the next meeting.

A2/22/ 03 Chairs update•Feedback from the last UCAS Council meeting•Any issues/feedback Group would like raised at the next Council meeting

Andrew updated the Group on the previous Council Meeting. Discussions were as followed –

- Four new members joined the council including Andrew.
- The launch of new [widening participation questions](#) in UCAS applications is now live.
- The plan is to initiate the self-release for students who are CF (Clearing Firm) or CI (Clearing Insurance) from summer 2023. Clearings from 2022 has been released.
- UCAS Fairs portfolio/ changes to systems are being made around Personal Statements and school references as a part of the application process.
- Professor Richard Harvey, Academic Director of Admissions, University of East Anglia, has stepped down after 9 years on the Council.

The next meeting will be held on 17th November. Chair has encouraged members to raise any concerns.

The following concerns were raised by the Group-

- Will the meeting ensure that UCAS recognises the impact on devolution in the way different nations work. Some universities use their own websites, and some use UCAS. Encourage UCAS to be aware and to represent Wales / the other 3 nations.
- ITE is an issue in Welsh Govt currently and UCAS may be asked to present at a forthcoming ministerial Group in relation to this.
- The Cardiff UCAS Fair is now being held at ICC Newport. This is a much larger Fair which allows more Universities and Colleges to come together. Accessibility for widening access in terms of public transport options has been discussed.
- Can the aim of the event be clear beforehand - students (especially those from a disadvantaged background who may be interested in a paid element of Apprenticeships) need to know if there will only be Universities at the Fair and a push for HE.
- The date for this UCAS Fair will be 26th-27th April.

A2/22/04 UCAS presentation: Shaping upcoming UCAS research: What does 'value' mean to students, and how does it influence their decision-making?

Haleema Masud presented UCAS Policy Group's study.

Over the last 18 months UCAS have produced several policy reports. These groups were formed partially to gather nation specific insights on our upcoming research. These are available for viewing on the UCAS website. A wide range of topics have been covered such as mental health, LGBTQ, widening access, and disability.

Highlights from recent reports (one on international students, and one on students with disabilities) were noted –

- International students aspire for HE abroad from a far younger age (11+)
- Students with disabilities were more likely to defer their HE. More than half of students with disabilities research student support services prior to applying.

UCAS have an up-and-coming report which focuses on care experience students at the end of November.

Value research

There is often an intersection between the argument about the 'value' of HE and 'value for money' of HE, with much of the existing research focused on the latter. Currently, there is little updated evidence that reflects on the intrinsic value of HE for students in the UK and how value of HE is perceived differently across different groups of people. UCAS ran a survey of c.20K applicants to answer some big Qs what does value mean to students? To what extent is value a key influencer in applicants' behavior? And, conversely, how do perceptions of value affect

individuals' decision-making?

Key findings (see slides for more details)

- Student's perceptions of value differ widely, so metrics are more difficult to produce.
- Students believe Universities and Colleges have the most responsibility in ensuring good value, then government comes second to this.
- There seems to be a focus more on job satisfaction/skill gain rather than financial gain.

Questions were directed at Group for discussion

What about the insight most interested and or surprises you?

- There may be differences in priorities of students applying from Wales as compared to other nations. Granularity within the research could be beneficial.
- It would be interesting to explore geographic mobility with Welsh students (specifically in the West). May go elsewhere due to lack of industry options where they live.
- It is not surprising that students are interested in gaining skills. Also, it's not surprising that focus is on wellbeing.
- A member previously carried out work around public attitudes in Wales- found that there was a sense of collective instead of individualistic tendencies- feels like students from Wales wanting to carry out meaningful work links to this quite a lot. It is somewhat surprising that this point of view has filtered down to/ is reflected in student values.
- Members see quite a few students looking at careers that are associated with being meaningful rather than money (i.e. teachers and nurses), which link to the findings.
- From a school perspective, members aren't seeing students wanting a certain 'career' for the rest of their life and there seems to be fewer students considering those subjects such as nursing and teaching. Instead, they are looking at broader studies and more of a 'portfolio career.' So, there is a balance between different cohorts (i.e. those who clearly know what they want to do and those who want to keep it broad.
- Meaningful work can also link to family culture.
- A surprising disarticulation between salary but emphasis on career even with the current economy.

Where could UCAS explore further?

- Members were interested to know if any differences

- In students who are not from Wales coming to study in Wales (i.e. international and English students).
- For Welsh students studying in Wales
- Welsh students studying in England/other places.
- It is important that in any research that involves Welsh students, that we ask the question of Welsh language (and even offer the survey in Welsh).

Is there any specific national context that may be affecting findings?

- Behaviour of regulators is different in England- OfS makes value driven decisions, but we don't have something similar in Wales so are immune from it in that sense. However, how much it impacts students directly is limited by their lack of knowledge of regulators.
- A lot of universities are looking at how they present themselves- some are looking to focus on meaningful careers and attracting students that way. Note that members thought that open days don't currently focus on employability though.
- A lot of emphasis is on how a degree will benefit students in the long term. However, this is not highlighted within fairs and events but instead from parental nudging or support from schools (may see disparity depending on a student's background).
- Some universities in Wales (not all) are pushing for wellbeing and holistic experience at universities.
- Wales was seen as behind England regarding degree apprenticeships
- Members noted that degree apprenticeships are seen as more tied to careers.
- From a school's perspective it was said that students want to have more information on degree apprenticeships- many looking at this from a skills basis. However, many schools are not always familiar with information and opportunities on this. As a result, members have seen many students go to England.
- Middle class students are seen as more proactive (sometimes because parents know more about universities, i.e. they had been themselves). But many students are looking to schools for information and advice.
- Given that this was the 2022 cohort, the pandemic may have influenced their values (particularly around wellbeing). Also, there may be some differences between nations depending on the given administrations' attitude to the pandemic at the time.
- Welsh language as an important context for Wales- important that we collect data on the expectation of studies (or degree apprenticeships) in Welsh as providing courses in English may act as a barrier.
- When Universities within Wales are presenting to prospective students about how the course can be beneficial to them, the priorities in the findings need to be pre-directed.

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- Wales are moving into degree Apprenticeships, and it will be interesting to see if this is attractive to students. The skills gained are practical and theoretical, which match policy findings.
- Teachers in Wales need to be directed on how to give students the right advice – a collaborative talk on career Apprenticeships needs to be had as there is not much information out there.

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A2/22/05 Campfire – member updates • CCEA to update on 2023 awarding arrangements • Updates from members of the group

The Groups main updates were -

- Developments around the commission for tertiary education and research - Wales is moving into a more integrated post-16 offer. We need to be mindful of how this may impact admissions in the future. The system is designed to support progression from school/FE – a greater diversity of routes for the future is within policy development.
- Looking at degree Apprenticeships over the next year with help from UCAS.
- Consultation is taking place on GCSE reform especially with courses like Dentistry and ensuring students will feel prepared when applying.
- Contextual Admissions Policy is being reviewed now they have access to UCAS data utilising the widening participation strategy.

It is encouraged Group Members reach out to Group Owner with any further questions.

Updates from UCAS:

- 15th Oct deadline data: Cost of living and examination changes post covid may be a factor to a lower number of students applying for the 15th October deadline for Medicine, Veterinary Sciences, Nursing, Oxford, Cambridge.
- There has been an increase in Welsh applicants between the ages of 30-34. Since 2019 those applying from disadvantaged background growth rate is also higher than those not.
- There has also been an increase in applications to Welsh providers.
- There are more female than male applicants
- UCAS will be looking into the cost-of-living topic and what this means for potential applicants in Feb next year.

A2/22/07 Any other business and Close

A placeholder for the 10th May has been put in place