

UCAS BUSINESS RULES AND PRINCIPLES REVIEW 2025

Recommendations

Good Practice

- To foster good practice in upholding the Rules and Principles, the Working Group recommends that UCAS take the following actions:
 - Define the relationship between the Business Rules and Admissions Principles (BRAP) and broader good practice frameworks, including both UCAS-established guidelines and external standards such as the Universities UK (UUK) Code.
 - Investigate opportunities to raise the visibility of good practice through initiatives such as a kitemark scheme and increased engagement with relevant online platforms
 - Actively collect and share anonymised examples of both good and bad practice within the sector, with support from the Provider Advisory Group (PAG).

Visibility

- The Business Rules and Admissions Principles are currently not sufficiently visible to providers, applicants, and advisers, thereby diminishing the likelihood of compliance. It is therefore recommended that UCAS enhance the visibility of the revised Rules and Principles by surfacing them to all relevant stakeholder groups through its communication channels. Additionally, these documents should be made easily accessible to all via the UCAS website.
- To further improve the visibility of the Business Rules and Admissions Principles for providers, it is recommended that the Admissions Guide be consolidated into a single, cohesive document and disseminated at a specified point within the admissions cycle.

Adherence

- The Working Group recommends the following actions to be taken in the event of a proven breach of the Business Rules and Admissions Principles:
 - Initiate contact with the Primary Correspondent, followed by escalation within the provider if no corrective action is taken.
 - Require completion of training for key staff, similar to the existing training protocols for embargo violations.
 - Consider whether the breach constitutes a violation of the terms of service, which could potentially result in the provider's removal from the UCAS scheme.

Rollout and Monitoring

The following steps are recommended to ensure effective rollout and monitoring:

1. UCAS conducts an awareness campaign to raise visibility of the Business Rules and Admissions Principles among students and advisers.
2. For the upcoming admissions cycle, UCAS tracks how frequently it is notified of relevant activities concerning the Rules and Principles.
3. After the data has been collected, the sector should reconvene in one year's time to assess the data, reflect on the progress made, and review the next steps accordingly.

BUSINESS RULES- RECOMMENDED CHANGES

Current number	Current	Changes?	Proposed	New number
Business Rule 1.	In order to provide a fair, transparent and comprehensive process for applicants and the sector, UCAS expects customers to list and recruit all eligible full-time undergraduate applicants through UCAS, identifying UCAS as the main application route on their website and in any marketing materials	Yes- minor wording	To provide a fair, transparent and comprehensive process for applicants and the sector, UCAS requires customers to list and recruit all full-time undergraduate applicants through UCAS, identifying UCAS as the application route on their website and in any marketing materials.	1
Business Rule 2.	The standard application route should be used to recruit applicants in most cases. The Record of Prior Acceptance (RPA) can be used according to exemptions listed in the Admissions Guide but must only be used in applicants' best interests and must never be used in order to curtail student choice.	No	The standard application route should be used to recruit applicants in most cases. The Record of Prior Acceptance (RPA) can be used according to exemptions listed in the Admissions Guide but must only be used in applicants' best interests and must never be used in order to curtail student choice.	2
Business Rule 3.	Customers must consider all applications for each course on an equal basis if they are received on or before the relevant equal consideration deadline.	No	Customers must consider all applications for each course on an equal basis if they are received on or before the relevant equal consideration deadline	3
Business Rule 4.	Customers must not ask applicants where else they have applied until the applicant has replied to all	Yes- minor wording	Customers must not ask applicants where else they have applied. Each application must be considered on its own	4

	offers made to them. Application choices to other providers will remain invisible until the applicant's replies have been recorded		merits and decisions should not be made on the basis of applications to other institutions made by the student.	
Business Rule 5.	Customers must use and update UCAS as the authoritative source of information on the status of an application submitted through UCAS systems.	Yes (Merge 5 and 6)	Customers must use and update UCAS as the authoritative source of information on the decision(s) made on applications submitted, and transmit all of the following using UCAS systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The initial decision outcome (offer/reject) ▪ The type of offer (conditional/unconditional/alternative offer) ▪ Any academic conditions ▪ Any other conditions that may result in a change in offer status (conditional to unconditional/offer to reject) ▪ Any decision or offer amendments ▪ Confirmation decisions 	5
Business Rule 6.	Customers must transmit the type of offer, any academic conditions, any other conditions which could result in a conditional offer becoming unconditional, subsequent decision/offer amendments, and Confirmation decisions to the applicant using UCAS systems.			
Business Rule 7.	Offers must clearly distinguish between those offer conditions which must be met to enrol on the programme of study, and those which are not an enrolment requirement (such as those that give priority access to services, or change the type of offer prior to the receipt of examination results)	Yes- minor wording	Offers must clearly distinguish between those offer conditions which must be met to enrol on the programme of study, and those which are not an enrolment requirement (such as those that change the type of offer prior to the receipt of examination results).	6
Business Rule 8.	Once an offer is made to an applicant, the terms of the offer should only be changed with the applicant's	Yes- minor wording	Once an offer is made to an applicant, the terms of the offer should only be changed with the applicant's consent	7

	permission if the change would impose additional or more stringent conditions on the applicant		if the change would impose additional or more stringent conditions on the applicant.	
Business Rule 10.	Customers must make decisions about applications by the relevant published reject by default date, otherwise UCAS will reject the application (RBD).	Yes - minor wording, move order	Customers are required to process decisions on applications by the relevant published reject by default (RBD) deadline.	8
Business Rule 9.	Customers must not ask applicants to reply to offers before the normal reply date, regardless of when the offer was made, unless the course starts before 1 September. Requesting early replies in return for benefits (e.g. priority access to accommodation) is not permitted. Even where courses start before 1 September, providers must allow applicants a reasonable period of time to consider their options and respond	Yes – split	Customers must not ask applicants to reply to offers before the normal reply date, regardless of when the offer was made, unless the course starts before 1 September.	9
			Customers should not incentivise early applicant replies in return for preferential access to benefits and services (e.g. priority access to limited accommodation). Even where courses start before 1 September, providers must allow applicants a reasonable period to consider their options and respond	10
Business Rule 11.	Customers must only communicate with applicants for reasonable purposes and must not seek to overturn or inappropriately influence their decisions. A customer must not approach an applicant who is holding a firm or insurance place at another customer unless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the applicant has requested the contact (noting that where contact is requested by an applicant, customers should keep a written record) 	Yes – split and wording changes	Customers must only communicate with applicants for purposes relating to admission to that provider and must not seek to unduly influence or alter their decisions. Communications should be clear, unambiguous and timely, in line with the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority.	11
			Customers can send communications to applicants who have made their firm and/or insurance choice with that provider but must not seek to influence them to change	12

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant has declined an offer with that customer and the customer is seeking feedback (noting that customers should keep a written record of such contact and must not use it in-cycle as a means of persuading applicants to change their decisions). 		<p>their firm/insurance choice. A decline/reject/withdrawal decision is considered an opt out of communications relating to an application to that provider, and customers must not approach these applicants unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant has requested the contact (noting where contact is requested by an applicant, customers should keep a written record). <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant has declined an offer with that customer and the customer is seeking feedback (noting that customers should keep a written record of such contact and must not use it in-cycle as a means of persuading applicants to change their decisions) 	
Business Rule 12.	Customers should not reject an applicant at Confirmation if they still have outstanding or missing conditions until either the standard deadline, or a deadline published by the customer in the offer, unless the applicant is unable to reach the terms of their offer based on the information already received.	Yes - clearer definition	Customers should not reject an applicant at Confirmation if they still have outstanding or missing conditions unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information already received is sufficient to be certain that the applicant will be unable to meet the terms of their offer. or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The standard or customer-published deadline has passed. 	13
Business Rule 13.	If customers wish to receive examination results early, they must sign the results embargo agreement and complete UCAS embargo training. There must be no disclosure, discussion, or communication with	Yes	If customers wish to receive examination results early, they must sign the results embargo agreement and complete UCAS embargo training. Customers are not allowed to discuss examination results obtained under the results	14

	applicants or other third parties before results are published.		embargo agreement with applicants until results are published as per the term of the agreement.	
Business Rule 14.	Upon reasonable written notice, Customers must provide UCAS with correct, accurate and up to date information (for example about applicants, acceptances, and acceptance routes) as soon as is reasonably practicable. UCAS shall have the right to access, copy and review any such information provided by the Customer as necessary in order to verify adherence to terms of service. Any such review shall be undertaken in close cooperation with the Customer and shall not unreasonably interfere with the Customer's normal business operations. UCAS shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by the Customer in cooperating with such a review	No	Upon reasonable written notice, Customers must provide UCAS with correct, accurate and up to date information (for example about applicants, acceptances, and acceptance routes) as soon as is reasonably practicable. UCAS shall have the right to access, copy and review any such information provided by the Customer as necessary in order to verify adherence to terms of service. Any such review shall be undertaken in close cooperation with the Customer and shall not unreasonably interfere with the Customer's normal business operations. UCAS shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by the Customer in cooperating with such a review	15
Business Rule 15.	Customers must inform UCAS immediately when they become aware of a security incident which has or may be likely to impact on customer systems with access to applicant data and has the potential to affect UCAS systems and services. This includes (but is not limited to) the loss or theft of credentials used to access UCAS systems or any other security incident affecting customer IT systems which may cause a direct impact to UCAS. UCAS will then assess the impact, and any restrictions required (including	Yes-condense	Customers must inform UCAS immediately when they become aware of a security incident which has or may be likely to impact on customer systems with access to applicant data and has the potential to affect UCAS systems and services. This includes (but is not limited to) the loss or theft of credentials used to access UCAS systems or any other security incident affecting customer IT systems which may cause a direct impact to UCAS. If you become aware of a security incident, please contact the Customer Success Team on 0344 984 1111	16

	whether it is necessary to temporarily suspend access to some or all of its systems to you) while the incident is managed; and will work with the customer to reinstate access as soon as practicably possible once assurances of system integrity have been provided and deemed acceptable by UCAS. This will enable UCAS to ensure the safety and security of applicant data. If you become aware of a security incident, please contact the Customer Success Team on 0344 984 1111			
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Admissions principles

- 1. Customers must show consistency, fairness, and the avoidance of bias in the consideration of all applications and the use of contextual information.**
- 2. Entry requirements and offer-making strategies must be evidence-based and designed to recruit students with the potential to succeed on their programme of study.**

3. Customers must support the provision of clear, current, and transparent information, including listing opportunities for study on the UCAS search tool.
4. The types of offers made for commonly presented qualifications must be listed on the UCAS search tool, including indicating at customer level the circumstances in which an offer may be made that is different to the published typical offer (for example, contextual offers).
5. All offer conditions must be clear, unambiguous, and within an applicant's control to meet.
6. Customers must let applicants know why they need any additional information they have requested and provide them with a reasonable deadline for supplying it. If the deadline must be short because of a UCAS or other (e.g. UKVI) deadline, then a customer will let the applicant know why.
7. Applicants should be given reasonable notice of any interview, audition, or additional assessment (either in person or electronically). If short notice must be given because of a UCAS or other deadline, then customers will explain this to the applicant.
8. Customers should give reasonable consideration to applicant requests for flexibility outside the standard dates and deadlines.
9. Customers must not place undue pressure (i.e. that which is not in the applicant's best interests) in order to directly or indirectly influence an applicant's decision.
10. Customers should take note of relevant sector good practice guidelines, such as the Universities UK (UUK) Code of Practice and the QAA Quality Code.