

Westminster Higher Education Forum Keynote Seminar: The next steps for the Higher Education admissions system

Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 22nd May 2012

Venue: Princess Alexandra Hall, Royal Over-Seas League, Over-Seas House, Park Place, St James's Street, London SW1A 1LR

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 - 9.00 Registration and coffee
- 9.00 - 9.05 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Ann McKechin MP, Member, Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee
- 9.05 - 9.25 **The Higher Education admissions system - analysing the proposals for reform**
Sean Coughlan, Education Correspondent, BBC News
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.25 - 10.10 **Implementing initial changes to the UCAS system - tailored personal statements, a 'single offers window' and improving efficiency**
Would the proposed opportunity for students to tailor sections of their personal statement for different courses and universities, as opposed to a uniform personal statement, improve universities' understanding of a candidate's suitability? Will combining the UCAS, Border Agency and student finance application systems improve efficiency and student experience of the process, and what are the obstacles to implementation? What would be the likely impact of the proposed 'single offers window' for university admissions process? To what extent should UCAS provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) on the admissions process through the proposed 'myUcas' web portal, and are there further ways UCAS could support the HE, FE and schools sectors in delivering IAG to applicants? What further measures could UCAS take to reduce applicant stress from the system?
Dr Paul Greatrix, Registrar, University of Nottingham
Siôn Humphreys, Policy Advisor, NAHT
Senior representative, students' union
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.10 - 11.00 **Qualifications Information Review - reforming the UCAS Tariff system**
How effective is the current Tariff in meeting the needs of applicants and HEIs (Higher Education Institutions), particularly for students who enter through alternative routes to A-levels, such as the International Baccalaureate, BTECs, Diplomas and Access qualifications? What steps could be taken to ensure greater standardisation of the recognition of non-A-level qualifications across the HE sector? Would the proposed 'Qualifications Information Profile' be an effective tool to assist HEIs, particularly those in different parts of the UK, with benchmarking 'new' qualifications against existing ones? How could UCAS work with schools, colleges, HEIs and wider stakeholders to extend the Awarding Body Linkage (ABL) Service so as to ensure that students have sufficient information about the qualifications particular universities prefer when choosing which programmes to study at 14 and 16? Should additional entry requirements such as interviews, admissions tests and portfolio presentations be made clear via the UCAS system at the time of applying?
David MacKay, Head, Awarding Body Stakeholder Engagement (HE & Professional Bodies), Pearson/Edexcel
Marie-Noël Earley, Registry Admissions Manager, University of St Andrews
Lindsey Noble, Principal and Chief Executive, City College Southampton
Dr Tristram Hooley, Head, International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.00 - 11.05 **Chairman's closing remarks**
Ann McKechin MP, Member, Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee
- 11.05 - 11.25 Coffee
- 11.25 - 11.30 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Lord Boswell of Aynho, Member, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education and Independent Governor, Cardiff Metropolitan University
- 11.30 - 12.00 **Next steps for the HE admissions system**
Mary Curnock Cook, Chief Executive, UCAS
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.00 - 12.55 **The way forward for the admissions system following the UCAS Admissions Process Review**
Latest thinking on overcoming obstacles for schools, awarding bodies and universities, identified in the Process Review, in implementing a post-results admissions system in the future; if no solution is possible what should be the way forward? Within the framework of the current admissions system, what steps could be taken to address unreliability of predicted grades? What changes could be made to the Extra stage of the application process ensure that this stage is more flexible and useful for applicants, as suggested in the Process Review, and achieve the aim of reducing the number of students entering the 'final application window'? Would introducing a gap between confirmation and the 'final application window' achieve its aim of better matching students with appropriate courses, and how would a gap impact on the organisation of student places and provision of student accommodation? Should part-time and mature student applications be brought into the UCAS system and what further provision could be made by UCAS and the HE sector to ensure that part-time and mature students receive the support they need when applying for university? To what extent should UCAS support the HE sector in providing contextual data services and outreach to further widening participation?
Louise Robinson, Headteacher, Merchant Taylors' Girls' School, Liverpool and President, Girls' Schools Association
Alex Shapland-Howes, Managing Director, Future First
Bob Savill, Head of Admissions, University of Chichester
Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment and Chairman, OCR
Richard Gould, Chief Executive, Villiers Park Educational Trust
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 - 13.00 **Chairman's and Westminster Higher Education Forum thanks and closing remarks**
Lord Boswell of Aynho, Member, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education and Independent Governor, Cardiff Metropolitan University
Jonny Roberts, Producer, Westminster Higher Education Forum