

UCAS

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ADMISSIONS
PROCESS
REVIEW
**RESPONSE
FORM**

We hope to receive a high level of response to this consultation from all those who have a stake in the higher education admissions process. We want to understand as fully as possible those aspects of the proposals which you support and those which cause concern. Where there are perceived problems, we encourage you to put forward preferred solutions. All your responses will be carefully analysed and a summative report will be published in March 2012.

In order to assist with the analysis and evaluation of responses, we would be grateful if you would provide us with the information requested below. Please note that any information given will be held by us and will only be used for the purposes of consultation and research. You are not required to provide your name but we will treat your identity in confidence if you do give it to us.

Name	Mrs Fiona Martland
Job title	Director
Organisation	Engineering Professors Council (EPC)

Are you replying as an individual or on behalf of your organisation?

On behalf of EPC

Please indicate which of the following categories applies to you/your organisation?

Higher Education - University
 Higher Education - College
 Higher Education – Private provider
 School
 FE college
 Applicant or potential applicant
 Parent of an applicant or potential applicant
 Government body
 Non-Government body
 HE sector body
 Other (please state)

Please enter one of these categories below:

HE sector body

Application post-results: proposed system

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.1)

A system of application post-results would deliver a fairer admissions process because the applicant would submit actual results and the reliance on predicted grades would be removed

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 3
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(APR Consultation ref 23.6.2)

Applying post-results will not necessarily have positive impacts on equality and diversity.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1
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(APR Consultation ref 23.6.3)

Two choices is an adequate number for Apply 2, allowing applicants both an aspirational and a more realistic application.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 4
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(APR Consultation ref 23.6.4)

A system of application post-results may encourage a mechanistic approach to admissions with contextual and other data used less effectively.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 1
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(APR Consultation ref 23.6.5)

The lack of flexibility in the proposed post-results system may mean that HEIs are forced to reject candidates they might have accepted in the current system.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 2
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(APR Consultation ref 23.6.6)

Giving young applicants more time to make application decisions recognises how much they mature over the final year at school or college.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

3

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.7)

A post-results system will not be agile enough to provide a better experience for all groups of students; those with A levels, those with Scottish Highers and those with other academic or vocational qualifications.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

1

(APR Consultation ref 23.6.8) Please specify any particular group of students whose needs would be less well met in a post-results system

For many students, especially those without the support of a school or parents experienced in advising students on HE options, it is likely that they will not start to think seriously about their course and university choices until after their examinations. Consequently, the proposed timetable could well have a negative effect on equality and diversity – quite the opposite effect to that intended.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

Initially, a post-results application system appears fairer. However, closer examination of the practical implications of the consequential process indicates that the proposed system could well have the opposite impact.

Two choices are inadequate for those applying to highly selective universities where they could get rejected from both and then find that their third choice is already full when they try again in Apply 3.

We would challenge the assumption that the proposed system would result in applicants making more mature and considered application choices. It is more likely that applicants would put off serious consideration until after they had completed their examinations. The present system forces them to take time to consider their options before the pressure of assessment builds up. This would be especially true of applicants lacking parents with prior experience of the application process.

It is quite common for engineering departments to interview all applicants. This provides a much richer basis for admission decisions than just the qualification results and the personal statements. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to provide advice. It will be very difficult to undertake this in the short summer period proposed and could well lead to a purely mechanistic approach based on qualifications alone.

Application post-results: widening participation

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 24.8.1)

A wider group of applicants would be encouraged to make more aspirational applications with the confidence of knowing they have achieved appropriate qualification results.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

3

(APR Consultation ref 24.8.2)

Applicants would be deterred from making aspirational applications by having to make decisions quickly and being restricted to two choices.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

1

(APR Consultation ref 24.8.3)

Applicants may not understand the importance of contextual data and would be deterred from applying for some courses if they have not achieved the grades.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

(APR Consultation ref 24.8.4)

Widening participation would be supported by more constructive and focussed advice and guidance.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

1

(APR Consultation ref 24.8.5) How do you think a system of application post results could be managed to enable it to promote widening participation?

The only way for a post-results application system to promote widening participation would be to allow more time for the application process. However, this would require significant changes to either the schools or HEI year, which are impractical in both cases.

More work should be done earlier to give advice and encourage students to think through their higher education and career options in good time. Staff in schools and colleges should be better trained to undertake this. Such a recommendation is not dependent on adopting a post-results application system.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

The key problem with the proposal is that the time periods envisaged are too short, both for the applicants and their advisors.

We remain unconvinced that a post-results system would necessarily widen participation; improvement in the level of encouragement and advice given to potential applicant from disadvantaged backgrounds is much more likely to have a positive impact.

Application post-results: Efficiency improvements

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 25.18.1)

A post-results system is an efficient system as fewer applications require processing by HEIs.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 3
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(APR Consultation ref 25.18.2)

A more efficient streamlined process would enable HEIs to make financial savings.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 3
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(APR Consultation ref 25.18.3)

A more streamlined process would make the process easier for applicants to navigate.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 3
--	---

(APR Reference 25.18.4) What disadvantages in terms of process efficiency, if any, could be experienced by HEIs, applicants or advisers as a result of a post-results system?

The perceived benefits in efficiency are largely due to the proposed reduction in the number of choices and the removal of the insurance choice rather than the shift to a post-results system. Both of these changes would discourage aspirational choices being made by the applicant.

The big problem with the proposed post-results system is the concentration of activity into a short period of time in the summer when academic staff are involved in research and are likely to be on leave for a period at that time. The pressure on administrative staff would also be much higher possibly resulting in temporary staff having to be recruited.

The shortness of time following the publication of results could well lead to formulaic and rushed decisions being taken. This is likely to disadvantage students with non-standard qualifications and contextual information is less likely to have any impact on admission decisions.

Please enter any further comments about this section below

The disadvantages of the proposed system as a result of its aggressive timescales far outweigh any perceived potential advantage of a post-results admissions process.

Application post-results: International and part-time students

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.1)

It is desirable for international applicants to apply through a centralised system and not direct to HEIs.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

1

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.2)

It is desirable for part-time applicants to apply through a centralised system and not direct to HEIs.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.3)

Access to improved data about international and part-time applications will be a benefit of being part of a central admissions service.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

1

(APR Consultation ref 26.5.4)

The proposed new process has the capacity to offer greater flexibilities which will support international and part-time admissions.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

3

Please enter any further comments about this section below

It is not clear how the facility in Apply 1 gives any more flexibility for international students than the present system.

The impact of any change to part-time applications is not likely to be very great as the geographical location of the HEI or special links with the employer are usually the most critical factors.

Application post-results: Examination, results and applications timetable

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.1)

The changes to the examination timetable should not have a major impact on the accuracy of assessment; with appropriate changes to their systems, awarding bodies should be able to maintain accuracy and rigour in a shorter marking period.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.2)

The option of starting the HE term for first year students in late October is worthy of consideration.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.3)

The option of starting the HE term for first year students in January is worthy of consideration.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4

(APR Consultation ref 28.7.4)

The resources available in schools and colleges will be sufficient to give students support to make applications and manage offers in the timescale proposed.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4

(APR Reference 28.7.5) What provisions could be made within the educational and qualification structures in Scotland to make a UK system of application post-results workable for Scottish students?

(APR Reference 28.7.6) What steps could be taken to secure parity for Northern Irish applicants whose school term currently ends at the end of June?

Please enter any further comments about this section below

A late October start would make the autumn term impractically short.

From an admissions point of view, a January start would allow sufficient time both for the applicant and the HE establishment to give due consideration. However, it would have considerable ramifications on the undergraduate teaching timetable. If graduation stays in the summer, the period of a bachelors' degree would effectively be only 2 ½ years and an integrated masters programme (e.g. MEng) would be only 3 ½ years. This would not allow sufficient time for the formation of a graduate engineer. Furthermore, in the context of the Bologna process, it would jeopardise the acceptance of the BEng and MEng as first and second round qualifications respectively. This would seriously damage the international acceptability of UK engineering degrees.

Moving the entire university year to coincide with the calendar year would be very disruptive and negatively impact the research and international activities of the HEI. Such a change would also have serious implications for postgraduate recruitment and teaching in the UK, and for the prospects of UK-educated students obtaining places and funding for postgraduate study elsewhere. This would harm the competitiveness of the UK higher education sector in an increasingly crowded marketplace.

There is insufficient time for schools and colleges to give support and advice to applications at a time when many staff would be on leave.

Application post-results: Proposed timetable changes

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 29.4.1)

An earliest start date of circa 8 October for first year students would not have a serious impact on the delivery of HE courses.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 4
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(APR Consultation ref 29.4.2)

Universities could make appropriate resources available to make offer decisions and process applications between mid-July and end August.

1- strongly agree 2- agree 3- disagree 4- strongly disagree	Enter number between 1 – 4 below: 4
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(APR Consultation ref 29.4.3) Please give any suggestions about what needs to be done to ensure that interviews can be successfully completed within the proposed model of applications post-results.

It is quite common for engineering departments to interview all applicants. This provides a much richer basis for admission decisions than just the qualification results and the personal statements. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to provide advice. With many staff heavily involved with research and taking leave in the summer vacation, many departments would find it very difficult to undertake interviews in the short summer period proposed.

(APR Consultation ref 29.4.4) Please give any suggestions how to accommodate applications for courses requiring auditions or the submissions of portfolios.

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Please enter any further comments about this section below

While for many universities, the option of starting the academic year in early October would not be a problem, for those which fit the first semester teaching into the autumn term, it would require a major change to the teaching year.

The difficulty in undertaking interviews in the short summer application period could well lead to a purely mechanistic approach based on qualifications alone.

Application post-results: Benefits and risks of the proposed 2014 year of entry enhancements

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 31.3.1)

A single offer date for all applications would help minimise the real or perceived advantages of applying as early as possible in the cycle.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

(APR Consultation ref 31.3.2)

The current process can be improved with a more disciplined approach to deadlines, service level agreements for decision-making by HEIs, with no informal agreements to relax them.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

(APR Consultation ref 31.3.3)

The replacement of Clearing with a managed process of applications with equal consideration for places available at that point would give students a more positive experience and achieve a better match of applicants to courses.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

3

(APR Consultation ref 31.3.4)

A short break between Confirmation and Apply 3 would help to improve the process to place applicants after they have received their results.

1- strongly agree
2- agree
3- disagree
4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

Please enter any further comments about this section below

While we agree that improvements to reduce the panic engendered by the present clearing process is desirable, we remain unconvinced that the proposed changes are in the best interests of the applicant.

There are a number of dangers with the proposal to replace clearing with a sequential electronic application to one course at a time:

1. The process militates against courses which interview clearing applicants as the applicant would be unwilling to wait for the interview if they could not explore other courses. Interviews provide an important source of advice to applicants at a time when they are in danger of grabbing at a course for which they are not suited. They also enable the HEI to assess the suitability and genuine level of interest of the student for a particular course and, as a result, interviewers are frequently able to suggest alternative courses for which the applicant would be better suited.
2. An applicant who first applies to a course with only a few vacancies and is subsequently rejected may find other possible courses have filled by the time they are released from their first choice.
3. Fearful of the danger above, an applicant may opt for a course which has many places but is not so suitable for the applicant.

The insurance choice

Option	Description	Benefits	Disadvantages
Keep insurance choice as is	A contractually-binding 2 nd choice, intended to offer a safety net to applicants not meeting the conditions of their firm choice	Supports applicants in making aspirational choices	Evidence shows that it is not well understood by applicants and is not used wisely
Remove insurance choice	Applicants accept one conditional offer and enter Clearing if they don't meet the conditions	Facilitates HEIs in managing their numbers	Does not support applicants in making aspirational choices; disadvantages recruiting institutions for whom the insurance choice may represent an important pool of applicants

Enforce correct use of insurance choice	Application system ensures that applicant has included at least one choice with lower entry requirements	Supports applicants in using the insurance choice as it was intended; fewer applicants needing to enter Clearing	Simple business rules don't reflect complexity of offers and what appears to be an unwise insurance choice may in reality not be, for instance for courses like medicine where the option for entry with lower grades does not exist.
Make insurance choice optional for HEIs	HEIs choose whether applicants can accept them as an insurance choice or only as a firm choice	HEIs for whom insurance choice is beneficial can continue with it; applicants can choose to apply to HEIs that accept insurance choice	More complex than current process and has capacity for unfairness
Replace insurance choice with priority wait list option	Applicant chooses one firm choice and can be added to wait list for up to four others. HEI gives priority to waitlisted applicants once CFs have been confirmed	Provides some back-up for applicant but not contractually binding on HEI so facilitates number management	Provides less certainty for applicants than current process. Is complex and would be difficult to implement

(APR Consultation ref 32.5)

In light of the information given above, please rank the options above in your preferred order (using 1 as the most effective through to 5 as the least effective).

Option	Rank 1 to 5
Keep insurance choice as is	2
Remove insurance choice	5
Enforce correct use of insurance choice	1
Make insurance choice optional for HEIs	4
Replace insurance choice with priority wait list option	3

Please enter any further comments about this section below

Loss of some form of insurance option would discourage applicants making aspirational applications. Applicants should not be held in limbo by institutions not making prompt decisions on the acceptance of conditional offers post results; deadlines should be strictly enforced by UCAS.

Timetable for reform

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

(APR Consultation ref 33.2.1)

2016 year of entry is a manageable start date for a system of applications post-results.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4

(APR Consultation ref 33.2.2)

2014 year of entry is a manageable date to be ready for the proposed changes to the current system.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

(APR Consultation ref 33.2.3)

We believe that the proposed changes for 2016 year of entry and 2014 year of entry are workable solutions.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

4

(APR Consultation ref 33.2.4)

If the proposal for 2016 year of entry does not go ahead, further refinements are needed to the 2014 process.

- 1- strongly agree
- 2- agree
- 3- disagree
- 4- strongly disagree

Enter number between 1 – 4 below:

2

Please enter any further comments about this section below

Assuming that the 2016 proposals are not implemented, further consideration of clearing and the handling of insurance choices would be required.

For more information about the UCAS admissions process review, please visit:

www.ucas.com/admissionsprocessrreview

Responses must be received in UCAS by 20 January 2012.

Please complete, save and return this document via email to:

admissionsprocessreview@ucas.ac.uk

Or if you wish, print out a hard copy and return the document to:-

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