

MSC/DSC response to UCAS QIR consultation

Recommendation 1: Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs)

Recommendation 1: The Qualifications Information Review recommends the development of UCAS Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs) and an associated database designed to give admissions tutors the information they need about applicants' qualifications.

To what extent do you agree, in principle, with the recommendation to develop Qualification Information Profiles and an associated database?

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | - |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

We endorse the recommendation to develop QIPs and an associated database as long as this involves:

- Inclusion in the profiles of details of how a given qualification is delivered (e.g. over 2 years)
- Annual review of the database
- The collection of evidence of usage of the database by institutions

At present, applicants seem to misunderstand institutions' use of the tariff points system and this does sometimes lead to complaints; it would need to be made clear as to how much flexibility institutions personally have in using the new proposed database and this should be clearly communicated to applicants to avoid placing institutions in the same scenario.

What would be the impact of this recommendation on you/your organisation?

Most institutions already hold their own databases on equivalencies and other qualifications, which require updating each year. This approach would help avoid duplication of effort and ensure institutions are referring to the most up to date information when determining which qualifications are acceptable for entry.

To what extent do you agree that this recommendation supports fairness, transparency and efficiency in HE admissions?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fairness | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transparency | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Efficiency | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

We believe that qualification information profiles and an associated data base will help to facilitate greater consistency providing an evidence-base for decisions across the sector. It also has the potential to support widening access as institutions would better understand 'non A Level' qualifications' and be more confident that they are making genuinely comparable offers. It could also promote better understanding for advisors and for potential applicants to HE taking these qualifications as to what they need to achieve to access higher education.

A number of stakeholders have identified additional information that they would value about qualifications. To what extent do you agree that the following information should be included, alongside judgements relating to academic demand?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Personal skills (e.g. team working and self management) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vocationally related skills and knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other:

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

Whilst information on personal skills and evidence of relevant vocational knowledge/work experience are important factors in the selection of medical and dental students, medical and dental schools employ other, more appropriate, methods to gain this information e.g. interviews. We do not view the QIP as the best tool for collecting or assessing this information.

Please share any views you have on how this information might be collated and presented.

It is essential that this database is available web-based.

To what extent do you agree that profiles of apprenticeships and Access to HE courses should be made available to HE, alongside level 3 UK and selected international qualifications?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Apprenticeships | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Access to HE courses | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail, including suggestions for additional information.

While inclusion of apprenticeships may be potentially helpful for admission to other university programmes, this is not relevant to admission decisions for medical or dental programmes. There are a growing number of access to medicine and dentistry courses and it can be difficult to assess the suitability of applicants coming through these routes, and MSC/DSC have developed guidance on assessing the acceptability of access courses for medical and dental schools. However it would also be helpful to have a common database with standardised information on access qualifications, and so agreed that access courses should be included alongside level 3 UK and selected international qualifications in the QIP database.

Some stakeholders have suggested that they would like UCAS to provide further information about other courses/qualifications/tests, such as level 2 qualifications and/or admissions tests, alongside that proposed for level 3 qualifications. To what extent do you agree that this additional information should be made available?

| | Strongly value | Value | Neither value nor not value | Do not value | Strongly do not value |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Level 2 qualifications | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Admissions tests | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other, please specify below | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other:

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail:

Further information on level 2 qualifications is essential as a growing number of schools enter students for non GCSE level 2 qualifications (e.g. AIDA, CIDA, DIDA). This would be beneficial in helping to define non-traditional qualifications such as Steiner or Montessori.

Please indicate whether you would favour a September 2013 or January 2014 launch of the Qualification Information Profiles and associated database and why you give this preference.

Favour September 2013 -

Favour January 2014

Neither of the above

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

A September 2013 launch would assist with 2014 entry processing. The deadline for medical and dental applications is 15 October and we would need time to incorporate the new information into our processes.

Please use the space below to outline what transition arrangements, if any, you think may be necessary to ensure that future applicants are not unfairly disadvantaged by implementation timing.

No comment.

Please use the space below to outline what communications and guidance you feel would be necessary to support implementation of this recommendation.

The communications strategy will need to encompass all stakeholders including Examination Boards, Schools, Colleges, careers advisors in a timely manner. Schools and learners will need to be made aware of the implications of the changes for them, particularly where universities could favour one exam board's qualification over another. We suggest that there should be regional training and awareness raising events as well as online guidance.

Please use the space below to add any further comments you have about this recommendation.

No comment.

Recommendation 2: A move towards grade-based entry requirements

Recommendation 2: The Qualifications Information Review recommends that HEIs consider the gradual withdrawal of the use of the UCAS Tariff for setting entry requirements and for offer-making, coupled with the promotion of the greater use of qualifications and grades for setting entry requirements and for making admissions offers and decisions. This would need to be accompanied by an extensive communication programme to support applicants and advisers. UCAS would commit to maintaining the existing Tariff for an agreed period of time, but would not evaluate new qualifications for inclusion after an agreed deadline.

To what extent do you agree, in principle, with the recommendation for the gradual withdrawal of UCAS Tariff points for setting entry requirements and for offer-making, coupled with the promotion of grade-based entry requirements and offer-making?

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | - |
| Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

Provided applicants and institutions are kept adequately informed, a gradual withdrawal of UCAS Tariff for setting entry requirements and for offer making alongside the promotion of grade-based entry requirements and offer making seems a sensible approach.

What would be the impact of this recommendation on you/your organisation?

Medicine and dentistry courses require applicants to have specified minimum grades in science subjects (usually Chemistry and Biology), these requirements are already communicated to applicants either in addition to or instead of minimum Tariff points. This recommendation is therefore likely to impact medical and dental admissions less than other areas of HE admissions.

To what extent do you agree that this recommendation supports fairness, transparency and efficiency in HE admissions?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fairness | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transparency | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Efficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

We believe that removal of the tariff will help support fairness and transparency in HE admissions as long as this is properly communicated. It will also be important that any central communication of entry requirements be supported by high quality information at individual institution and course level. Applicants should not be discouraged from consulting directly with the institution to which they are applying about entry requirements. This is particularly important for courses that have requirements beyond academic qualifications like medicine and dentistry.

What are your views on the proposed timing of the withdrawal of the use of UCAS Tariff points so that grade-based entry requirements are encouraged for all courses starting in 2015 (set by HEIs in 2013).

Withdrawal of the use of the Tariff for courses starting in 2015 seems reasonable, provided that potential applicants for 2015 are informed early enough.

If agreed, we plan to introduce Qualification Information Profiles from September 2013. During the transition phase, there will be the need for the Tariff to run at the same time as this new system. For how long should UCAS maintain the UCAS Tariff after the introduction of Qualification Information Profiles?

We would suggest two application cycles would be a reasonable time period to maintain the Tariff alongside the new system.

From when should we cease to evaluate new qualifications for inclusion in the Tariff?

Suggest immediately in order to encourage use of the QIP.

Please use the space below to outline what actions UCAS could take to support you/your organisation during any transition from the use of Tariff points in admissions to a qualifications and grade-based model.

No comment.

Please use the space below to outline what communications and guidance you feel would be necessary to support implementation of this recommendation.

HEIs will need to work with UCAS to ensure that information on entry requirements provided on institutions' websites and in UCAS entry profiles on the UCAS website are up to date.

Please use the space below to add any further comments you have about this recommendation.

No comment.

Recommendation 3: A means of comparing 'demand' across qualifications

Recommendation 3: The Qualifications Information Review recommends the development of a rigorous means of comparing academic demand/difficulty across different qualifications, underpinned by independent criteria and validated by HE, to support HE admissions.

To what extent do you agree, in principle, with the recommendation for the development of a means of comparing 'demand' across different qualifications, underpinned by criteria and ratings validated by HE?

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | - |
| Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

We agree in principle that an academic 'demand' rating would provide additional 'within level' information that would help universities gauge relative suitability for progression and value of a family/group of qualifications. However we also note the complexity and difficulty of developing a valid and reliable mechanism for comparing demand across different qualifications and agree that UCAS should look to demonstrate that any cost to develop such a tool is justified by the potential benefit.

What would be the impact of this recommendation on you/your organisation?

No comment.

To what extent do you agree that this recommendation supports fairness, transparency and efficiency in HE admissions?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fairness | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transparency | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Efficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

We believe that a means of comparing demand across different qualifications, as described in the consultation document, has the potential to dispel misconceptions and prejudices about the relative value of different qualification sets.

Please use the space below to share any comments you have on the proposed academic demand criteria outlined in the consultation document.

No comment.

Please use the space below to share any comments you have on the role of the qualification advisory group, as outlined in the consultation document.

We are supportive of the proposed main role of the qualifications advisory group - to agree a rating scale based on these criteria and hence identify qualifications of equivalent levels of demand for HE admissions purposes. We agree that this group should be made up of HE subject and qualifications experts. It is important that it is also appropriately convened and appropriately representative of different subject groups. It will also be important to include current university students in this group.

Please use the space below to outline what communications and guidance you feel would be necessary to support implementation of this recommendation.

No comment.

Please use the space below to add any further comments you have about this recommendation.

If this recommendation is to be implemented we suggest that information and training workshops for admissions staff will be important to ensure the method of comparing demand across qualifications is properly understood. These workshops should be accompanied by information materials available online.

Recommendation 4: A simple qualifications metric for HE management information.

Recommendation 4: The Qualifications Information Review recommends the development of a simple qualifications metric for HE management information in conjunction with HESA and HEFCE, SFC, HEFCW and DELNI and following agreement on the UCAS demand criteria and rating scale.

To what extent do you agree, in principle, with the recommendation to develop a simple qualifications metric for HE management information purposes?

Strongly agree

Agree -

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

Assuming that the recommendation to develop a robust method of comparing demand across qualifications is implemented then a simple qualifications metric for HE management information purposes that draws on demand as well as size information could be very useful for HEIs. It would be important that the metric is used only for HE management purposes.

What would be the impact of this recommendation on you/your organisation?

We welcome UCAS' acknowledgement of the need to ensure that any new metric does not place additional administrative costs or burden on institutions, caused by any additional demands such as data collection.

To what extent do you agree that this recommendation support fairness, transparency and efficiency in HE admissions?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fairness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transparency | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Efficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

We believe the metric could be a helpful tool for institutions and could save time and improve efficiency.

Do you think that any dimensions other than academic demand and qualification size should be considered within HE management information metrics?

- | | |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | - |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail.

We suggest that the following dimensions also be considered for inclusion within HE management information metrics:

- Currency of qualification (historical reference for extant qualifications)
- Mode of delivery (F/T, P/T)
- Qualification assessment strategy
- Overlapping qualifications

Please use the space below to outline what communications and guidance you feel would be necessary to support implementation of this recommendation.

No comment.

Please use the space below to add any further comments you have about this recommendation.

The metric must apply to all qualifications taken by the applicant, not just those in the year of application and so needs to accommodate data for previous qualifications for resitting applicants.

Recommendation 5: An annual report on the use of qualifications in HE admissions

Recommendation 5: The Qualifications Information Review recommends the provision of a UCAS annual report on the use of qualifications within HE admissions.

To what extent do you agree, in principle, with the recommendation for UCAS to produce an annual report on the use of qualifications within HE admissions?

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | - |
| Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

Updates on new qualifications will be essential, and an annual report will provide UCAS with a method of alerting institutions of any changes.

What would be the impact of this recommendation on you/your organisation?

An annual report with relevant information on the use of qualifications has the potential to help support the professional development of admissions staff.

To what extent do you agree that this recommendation support fairness, transparency and efficiency in HE admissions?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fairness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transparency | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Efficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

An annual report with relevant information on the use of qualifications could provide an evidence-base that would both support and demonstrate high professional standards in admissions.

Please share any comments you have on the scope of the annual report as outlined in the consultation document.

No comment.

When in the academic year should this report be published so that it can be most helpful in supporting HE admissions?

December, as this is both ahead of prospectus production and agreement of entry requirements.

Please use the space below to outline what communications and guidance you feel would be necessary to support implementation of this recommendation.

No comment.

Please use the space below to add any further comments you have about this recommendation.

No comment.

Recommendation 6: Optional admissions tools

Recommendation 6: The Qualifications Information Review recommends the provision of optional admissions tools for those HEIs wishing to make more flexible grade-based offers, subject to consultation with the sector.

To what extent do you agree, in principle, with the recommendation to provide optional admissions tools for those HEIs wishing to make more flexible grade-based offers?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree -

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

A tool to allow HEIs to make more flexible grade-based offers drawing on a broader base of information could be useful in some areas of HE admission. However, a tool of this kind has a limited application. Medical and dental schools need to assess the range of skills and attributes beyond academic attainment; institutions currently assess these skills and attributes using a number of methods including interviews and aptitude tests. A tool such as the one described would not negate the need for such methods.

What would be the impact of this recommendation on you/your organisation?

No comment.

To what extent do you agree that this recommendation support fairness, transparency and efficiency in HE admissions?

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fairness | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transparency | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Efficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | - | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space to explain your views in more detail.

We believe that the proposed tool, if used appropriately, has the potential to support fairness through providing institutions with a broader body of information supporting more informed and consistent decision making.

Would you/your organisation want to use such tools within admissions?

Yes

No

Don't know -

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail.

There is potential for such a tool to be useful to medical and dental schools, however this depends on the scope and quality of the tool and how it aligns to medical and dental schools' specific needs.

Please use the space below to outline what communications and guidance you feel would be necessary to support implementation of this recommendation.

No comment.

Please use the space below to add any further comments you have about this recommendation.

No comment.

Releasing the full potential of the review outcomes

UCAS is committed to ensuring that its products and services are strengthened in light of any agreed changes, so the benefits of the new qualifications information system are fully shared with learners, applicants, schools and colleges. Please use the space below to share any comments or suggestions regarding ways in which UCAS products and services might be revised in light of the proposals made in the consultation document.

No comment.

Do the proposals outlined in the consultation documents take sufficient account of the education and HE environment in your part of the United Kingdom?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail.

No comment.

Do you believe that the proposals outlined in this document will be sufficiently flexible to accommodate any future changes to the UK qualification and examination systems?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail.

No comment.

Please use the space below to outline any additional features that you would like UCAS to provide in a new qualifications information system.

No comment.

Implementation and resourcing

The introduction of a new qualifications information system should deliver efficiency gains for HE providers. Please outline any views you have on the perceived efficiency benefits of the proposals and any suggestions for how any disadvantages could be minimised.

No comment.

The cost of developing, delivering and running the new service will be met by UCAS. This means that there might need to be a small increase in the capitation fee. If you work for an HEI, would your institution be willing to pay a small increase for access to this enhanced service?

N/A, I do not work for a HEI -

Yes

No

Don't know

Please use this space to explain your answer in more detail.

For individual HEIs to respond.

If the proposals are agreed, UCAS plans to support implementation through a comprehensive, long-term engagement programme aimed at HE admissions staff, learners and their advisers. We would welcome comments on the particular needs of different stakeholder groups, especially more mature learners and those learners who have limited access to high quality information and advice.

No comment.

Further Comments

No further comments.