

## **GuildHE response to UCAS international consultation, July 2014**

We welcome UCAS's attempt to develop a clear picture of international needs and to explore how UCAS might address these. The consultation recognises a number of different stakeholder-groups, including international students, admissions managers and international managers; it will be important to consider these different perspectives in any future developments.

We will not be providing a response to the detailed consultation questions but we have the following broad comments/questions about the consultation which we hope will be helpful going forward. We also support the more detailed response made by the UK HE International Unit, which we would encourage UCAS to consider.

UCAS's priority should be ensuring core services are functioning well. This must be the priority whatever new developments are undertaken. It is acknowledged that there have recently been (and continue to be) issues and questions around core services and the priority must be on ensuring that the core system is stable and robust. Otherwise any efficiencies - and goodwill - generated by introducing new improvements will be cancelled out.

The Home/EU market is, and will remain, crucial to UCAS's operations and to the sector and the supply of students. If additional services or systems are to be developed, they must be operationally practical and acknowledge the criticality of Home/EU admissions. They must also ensure equal treatment is possible across all applicant groups.

Following on from the two above points, UCAS will need to consider in more depth what capacity it has, and would need, to take on an international system and deliver it smoothly and effectively. In particular we would raise the following:

- The consultation document suggests a range of detailed services and efficiencies, but says little about how the system would be financed and managed at the overarching level. This needs to be considered as a priority if sector support is to be guaranteed.
- More detailed consideration will need to be given to pricing models - addressing the cost of a potential service against demand. Institutions will be acutely interested in this (as will students if there is a fee for using the service).
- Would the requirements of international admissions fit into the existing UCAS framework - and how (or how not)? Or will the system need to be a separate system?
- We note that a number of recommendations around international admissions were made during the earlier Admissions Process Review. UCAS will need to consider what progress will now be made with these recommendations and how will it happen.

We would be glad to work with UCAS going forward to identify what the process would look like for developing these proposals further. As we have pointed out above, we expect there will need to be a further scoping process, which will need to recognise and reflect the desires of different communities - including those for whom other (existing) UCAS services are the priority.

As the consultation document recognises, there are several different constituencies for this service: university and college leaders, managers of international, managers of admissions, and students/applicants themselves. How do the interests of these constituencies coincide, where might there be tensions, and how are the latter being resolved? Some transparency here will help UCAS to proceed with a consensus.

We would also highlight the need to give further consideration to the following:

- What is the definition of "international" (domicile? fee-status? other categories?)
- Significant further thought will need to be given to deadlines as well as start dates.
- Data-supply as well as data-collection. At several points the consultation makes suggestions about improvements to data and information collection for international admissions - for example enhancing qualifications lists. The efficiencies generated by these proposals will be welcome, but we would also ask UCAS to consider what benefits an international service could deliver in terms of data *supply*. UCAS is an important provider of information about demand and recruitment to HE for Home/EU students, and there is an opportunity here to extend that role more widely across international recruitment. Potential management information benefits to institutions as well as wider public information should be considered.