

Delivery Partnership Steering Group

Interim Progress Report No 5 – July 2007

Delivery Partnership: Improving the higher education applications process

Purpose

1. This note provides an **Interim Report** on the Delivery Partnership Steering Group meeting (DPSG) held on 28 June 2007. The Delivery Partnership is a Higher Education-led process set up to implement reforms to the current applications process. Attention is drawn to the initial outcomes of the three consultations recently issued by the Delivery Partnership:

Consultation 1: A draft statement of good practice on feedback to applicants who have been unsuccessful in gaining a place at an HEI

Consultation 2: Revision of the admissions process for entry to Art & Design courses

Consultation 3: Models to implement an adjustment period to enable applicants who achieve higher grades than those required by their conditional offers to make a new application in August.

2. The consultations were circulated in May and the closing date was 18 June. Each consultation received responses from across all stakeholders and a wide range of institutions. The Group expressed thanks to all respondents from a wide range of education stakeholders including schools and universities who had replied and for the constructive comments in many of the responses. This was particularly appreciated given the short-time available for consultation.

3. Detailed work is continuing on the analysis of the material and a full Progress Report will be circulated in July, but initial indications are provided below in the light of the DPSG discussions on 28 June. The DPSG agreed that it would examine the fairness of current practice within the HE applications process with a number of applicant and HEI case studies. The DPSG also acknowledged that UCAS's need for decisions as soon as possible to allow for implementation in 2009.

Consultation on feedback to applicants

4. The DPSG invited comments on a draft statement of good practice on feedback to applicants who have been unsuccessful in gaining a place at an HEI. There were 171 responses of which a total of 116 (68%) were HEIs – 93 universities and 23 other HEIs, there were also responses from the Russell Group, 1994 Group and Conservatoires UK, 44 (26%) schools, colleges and sixth forms (state and independent), 5 were FE, plus responses from ASCL and ASCL (NI), and the Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG). 95 % agreed

overall with the statement of good practice. Responses were constructive and detailed and a further analysis is continuing.

5. In the light of the constructive suggestions received for improvements to the statement, it was agreed that staff at the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) would revise the statement and a joint DPSG/SPA statement of good practice would be distributed to universities, schools and colleges in September. In order to take forward how more informative feedback can be implemented it was agreed that SPA would explore the suggestions raised in the consultation with UCAS over summer which included the delivery of feedback via electronic means.

Consultation on art and design

6. The DPSG proposed revisions to the current route B application process, the most significant change being that institutions would be required to designate courses to be applied for through one route only and not two as at present. There were 112 responses were received with 73% responding positively to the proposal, 21% rejecting and 5% were undecided.

7. Those expressing positive and negative views included the full range of educational stakeholders from sixth form colleges, secondary and independent schools, specialist and generalist colleges, however the strength of the negative view, particularly from HEIs, did not provide the level of immediate endorsement for the changes. Thus, the DPSG agreed that the Art and Design Working Group, which had not yet had the opportunity to fully consider the consultation outcomes, should receive the full report on the analysis and come back to the DPSG with further recommendations in October.

Consultation on adjustment models

8. A total of 147 responses were received: 106 from universities and other providers of higher education, 22 from sixth form colleges and state maintained schools, 13 from independent schools and 6 from other educational organisations including university mission groups and school sector trade unions.

9. Following discussion the DPSG agreed that Model A would not be progressed further. However, following many helpful suggestions from the constructive additional proposals from a number of respondents, and being mindful of the need to make carefully considered decisions, the DPSG agreed that the Timings and Adjustment Working Group should meet again in July. The Group would look in detail at Model B alongside the new suggestions with a view to combining the positive elements of Model B with the best of the suggestions provided. There was a general concern that possible unintended consequences needed to be considered in detail before deciding any way forward. The additional suggestions sought to address the issue of proportionality and focussed on making improvements to the Clearing process. The Delivery Partnership hoped to take account of these issues in the revised way forward.

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