

Written evidence submitted by UCAS

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Background

UCAS provides the UK’s shared admissions service that spans undergraduate, postgraduate, technical, and apprenticeship pathways, with the undergraduate service alone supporting over 700,000 students a year accessing UK higher education (HE). As an independent charity, UCAS is the leading authority on student progression. Our retrospective and forecasting analysis, along with our release of eight million data points each year, play a vital role in informing the sector’s understanding of student demand and behaviour. In addition, our reach and audience - ucas.com receives 30 million unique visits per year – and careers information, advice, and guidance (CIAG) expertise, which includes tools such as the Careers Quiz, where outcomes and local skills data support decision-making, mean that we have the capability to support the Government and sector in addressing skills gaps.

Our commitment to fair access is increasingly seeing us explore the equality picture through a skills lens. As such, our primary interest in this inquiry is in two key pillars: **promoting careers in teaching** and **boosting diversity, inclusion, and social mobility across the teacher workforce**.

Historically postgraduate teacher training applicants in England applied through UCAS’ teacher training service. In November 2019, the Department for Education began its pilot of their own teacher admission service in England which was fully rolled out to replace UCAS’ role in October 2021. As such, UCAS no longer plays a role in postgraduate teacher training in England although we still facilitate entry onto undergraduate teaching training courses in

England. However, in Scotland and Wales, UCAS continues to administer the teacher training application system, where applicants apply via the UCAS undergraduate scheme for both undergraduate and postgraduate routes.

Summary of this briefing:

- Our January equal consideration deadline data **reveals a 12% drop in the number of applications to teacher training and education** related subjects since the same point last year from English higher education providers. There has also been **a 25% year on year drop in applications to courses where the specific outcome is a teacher training qualification** (applies mostly to Welsh and Scottish providers).
- **Our reach and expertise make UCAS key to promoting careers in teaching:** UCAS is a trusted, free-to-access, personalised source of careers, information, advice, and guidance (CIAG) for 1.3 million school pupils and mature students researching their post-secondary options. Within this service we are able to provide a personalised experience for students exploring a teaching career. We also have unique insight into the motivations of those going into teaching. For example, our survey results found that 77% of teaching applicants selected 'getting a job where my work is meaningful', as a key motivation compared to only 61% of other applicants.
- **We aspire to be the gateway to teaching apprenticeship opportunities:** UCAS aims to be 'route neutral' across all pathways including academic and technical routes such as apprenticeships, which are listed on UCAS' Career Finder service. As recently [announced](#) by the Education Secretary and UCAS, from autumn 2024 people will be able to search and apply for apprenticeships alongside degrees on UCAS.com.
- **UCAS' Fair Access Programme can act as a vehicle for raising aspiration among the future teacher workforce,** attracting individuals from underrepresented backgrounds into the profession.
- **UCAS can support industry and policy makers in addressing skills gaps and shortages within teaching:** We are keen to work with the Government to conduct research for the teacher training sector, and explore how we can support workforce planning. As a trusted brand reaching 1.8 million people, we are well placed to help promote careers in teaching and by working with Government, we could reach students via social media, email and direct mail. We can also ensure early targeted interventions, focussing on Year 12 and Year 13. Our [Next Steps: Who are the 'future nurses'?](#) report and work with the NHS provides a blueprint of how we can help the Government address shortages in the teaching sector.

What does UCAS' data reveal about trends in teaching and education?

2022 – end of cycle data

UCAS' data can provide insight into those who will go on to become teachers. Many future teachers will study teaching and education courses at an undergraduate level or courses that involve a teaching component. There will also be many future teachers who have studied other subjects at undergraduate level and who subsequently undertake a postgraduate course in teacher training.

Our 2022 End of Cycle data reveals that there were 36,950 offers made to education teaching courses from applications to Higher Education Providers (HEPs) in England in 2022 which is down slightly on last year's figures but above pre pandemic figures from 2019 (33,525). The data also revealed that a significant majority of these applicants are female. See further detail in the [appendix](#).

The following 2022 End of Cycle statistics are for courses that have a postgraduate teacher training outcome. Whilst there are a small number of courses at English providers still coming through via UCAS, these courses are primarily at HEPs in Scotland and Wales, with HEPs in Wales joining UCAS Undergraduate in 2022. Like at undergraduate level, these applicants are more likely to be female. (See appendix).

Accepted applicants	2019	2020	2021	2022
Teacher training	2,590	2,830	2,630	3,250
Proportion of applicants accepted	2019	2020	2021	2022
Teacher training	49.2%	50.8%	41.2%	54.7%

2023 January equal consideration deadline

We also have data from our January equal consideration deadline (ECD) on the number of applications to teacher training and education undergraduate courses, and Scottish and Welsh postgraduate courses. It is important to note that we are only partially way through the cycle and this number is likely to increase.

Number of applications to teacher training and education related subjects (England Higher Education Providers only):

Applications	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
(CAH22) education and teaching	42,090	40,820	45,440	48,080	42,260

The number of applicants to teacher training courses at HEPs in primarily Scotland and Wales where the specific outcome of the course is a postgraduate teacher training qualification is as follows:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
4,340	4,410	5,720	4,860	3,650

So far at this point in the cycle we can see that there has been a 12% decrease in the number of applications to teacher training and education related courses in English providers compared with the same point in the cycle last year. For courses that result in a specific outcome of a postgraduate teacher training qualification (almost entirely Scottish and Welsh HEPs) there has been a 25% decrease in the numbers of applicants compared with last year.

What does UCAS' research say about the impact of cost of living on prospective students?

We recently [submitted evidence](#) to the APPG for Students' cost of living inquiry and released a [blog](#) outlining our findings. As discussed later in this submission, we know that applicants to teaching and education are significantly more likely to be from a disadvantaged background and so increased costs will be particularly impacting them. [Our research](#) found more students are considering living at home and only 11% of prospective applicants recall receiving information about the cost of living, and need more support.

Some other findings included:

- 2 in 5 have reduced open day attendance and 5% didn't attend any due to associated costs. In particular, of those we surveyed, 38% of those exploring teacher training and education courses told us they had to cut down the number of open days they attended because of the expense.

- 51% have lowered their expectations of student life.
- 58% are considering getting part time work.

We have recommended that the Government create a transition fund to support particularly disadvantaged students manage significant upfront costs prior to student finance.

How does UCAS support applicants now?

What does UCAS' insight say about student decision making and the motivations of potential prospective teachers?

Over the past two years, UCAS has released a series of high-impact reports that shine a light on pertinent issues in education and skills. Our 'Where Next?' series examines how people make decisions about their future and the influence of these choices on what they do next – from GCSEs to employment.

We have asked applicants to consider what was important to them when thinking about getting 'good value' from a university or college course. For teaching applicants, having meaningful work, job security and clear progression into work scored very highly.

- 77% of teaching applicants selected 'getting a job where my work is meaningful', compared to only 61% of other applicants.
- 56% of teaching applicants selected 'getting a job with job security', compared to 48% of non-teaching applicants.
- 50% of teaching applicants selected 'getting a job where I have a clear career path', compared to 35% of other applicants.

In comparison to other applicants, having a high graduate salary is much less important to teaching applicants:

- 20% of other applicants selected having 'a high graduate salary in the short term (around 2 years post-graduation)' as important to them, compared to 13% of teaching applicants.
- This trend continued for the other salary options, with 26% of other applicants selecting 'high graduate salary in the medium term (around 5 years post-graduation)' compared to 14% of teaching applicants. *Source: UCAS New Applicant Survey 2022*

In the New Applicant Decisions survey we asked applicants why they wanted to go to university or college. Applicants who had applied to at least one teaching course were by far the most focused on going to university 'to help me pursue a particular career', with 88% of teaching applicants selecting this option compared to 72% of all other applicants. The other most common reasons selected by teaching applicants included: 'Because I am passionate about the subject I want to study' (57%, compared to 72% of non-teaching applicants) and 'To develop the essential skills needed in my career' (47% compared to 50% of other applicants). *Source: UCAS New Applicant Decisions Survey 2022*

What is UCAS' role in providing enhanced CIAG to promote careers in teaching?

UCAS is a trusted, free-to-access, personalised source of information and advice for millions of school pupils and mature students. Each year there are 30 million unique visits to ucas.com, with students exploring content on the full range of post-secondary options UK-wide, including technical education, apprenticeships, and flexible and lifelong learning. Our

objective is to build UCAS into a leading discovery brand, in line with our charitable mission, positioning ourselves as **'route neutral'** to ensure parity across all pathways including academic and technical routes, including apprenticeships. Under new plans [announced](#) by the Education Secretary and UCAS in February 2023, by autumn 2024, people will be able to use UCAS to search and apply for apprenticeships, alongside degrees. We are always working to improve our offer.

- **The UCAS Hub**, our personalised information and advice dashboard, is the go-to place for students of all ages to explore the full range of post-secondary options.
- Our website provides resources to help those exploring a [teaching career](#), including information on how to apply to teaching, including entry requirements, the timeline as well as information about funding, apprenticeship options, and guidance about the specific application processes in [Scotland, Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#). We also have a specific page on the process of obtaining a [Postgraduate Certificate in Education](#).
- A new **Careers Quiz** matches students to their best-suited career options and shows them the skills required, typical daily tasks and likely salaries.
- **Discover Your Future Events programme**, both physical and virtual, connects students, teachers and advisers with HE and FE providers, employers and support, and outreach services.
- UCAS has a strong and continually growing relationship with employers and has successfully adapted its expertise in course search development to create the 'Careers Finder' apprenticeships tool. Our most recent innovation includes apprentice-specific industry guides including, [teaching and lecturing](#) and allows employers to create profiles on UCAS and showcase their offer to students.

What is UCAS doing to ensure parity in the different post 16 education routes?

- **Partnerships** will remain at the heart of our approach to CIAG as we build on existing relationships with the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), Gatsby Foundation, Careers and Development Institute (CDI) and other key organisations UK-wide.
- We are committed to working with school pupils **from a younger age**, engaging with those aged 13+ to inform and influence their decision-making. This aligns to our ambition to be the 'digital Baker Clause', right from the start, mindful that early engagement is key to opening doors.
- **Clearing Plus** is our data-led system that suggests courses to students based on their preferences and grades. This introduces students to opportunities, including apprenticeships, they may have previously considered out of reach.
- Our central courses database is being enhanced to enable capture of a greater range of provision, including short courses and modules, allowing UCAS to support applications for **lifelong learning opportunities**, and powering the promotion of such opportunities to potential students.
- We are **deepening the personalisation technology** within the UCAS Hub to support students with individual needs, and in recognition of their local context.

All these efforts mean that we can provide a personalised experience for students exploring teaching as an option, explaining the various routes into the profession and presenting all this information in one single place. This will help simplify the process of getting into the teaching profession.

UCAS nursing case study: what our research found & how we are working with policy makers to support workforce planning

Most recently, UCAS, in partnership with Health Education England (HEE), published [Next Steps: Who are the 'future nurses'?](#) The report painted a picture of the next generation of nurses who have been inspired by the pandemic, revealing that more than two-thirds (69%) of 2021 nursing applicants cited the pandemic as their inspiration to apply.

The report also found that there is a 'positive equality gap' - nursing joins education and health and social care courses as one of only three subjects where more young people from the most disadvantaged areas in the UK choose to study nursing than their most advantaged counterparts. However, on the other, the gender gap remains stark with women more than 9 times more likely to choose and be placed on nursing courses than men. The application gap rises to 57 times more likely for children's nursing course.

For the last four years, UCAS has been heavily involved with the 'We are the NHS' campaign working both directly with the client and their marketing agency. We've done this through a replicable campaign which took the following form:

- Insight and research – Use of insight surveys, focus groups and one-to-one interviews, as well as broader research reports such the piece mentioned above.
- Audience identification – The identification of audiences to target including 'subject crossover' i.e., those subjects where we see a correlation with nursing.
- Media campaign – Use of traditional display media, email, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok) and interactive broadcasts.
- Reporting & Attribution – Proving return-on-investment by attributing demand to the campaign.

What can be done to support teacher recruitment and raise aspiration among the future teacher workforce, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds?

At UCAS we are committed to doing our part to support people from all backgrounds pursue their chosen career path. Already, our data reveals that in teaching specifically there are a significant proportion of applicants from a disadvantaged background.

In 2022, POLAR4 data outlining the least and most disadvantaged backgrounds of applicants, revealed that the gap for most and least disadvantaged education and teaching applicants was 1.5 compared to 2.1 for all applicants. For applicants domiciled in England the gap for education and teaching applicants in 2022 was 1.0, compared to 2.0 for all applicants. This means that applicants to education and teacher training are more likely to be from a disadvantaged background than the average applicant. These figures are welcome, but we need to think further about how we ensure the pipeline for the most disadvantaged applicants is made clear and they have the support needed to take their next steps – and continue to progress in their teaching career in the longer term.

Given that within the decade we are forecasting there will be [up to a million applicants](#), there is a once in a generation opportunity to capitalize on this growth in demand and tackle shortage occupation areas such as teaching. Despite this opportunity, it is important to recognise that there are real risks to the progress made in widening access and participation, as the increase in competition risks disadvantaged students losing out. In light of this

challenge , UCAS has developed a Fair Access Programme and will continue to boost our services to support students from all backgrounds and build on positive work across the sector.

How can UCAS help address industry skills gap in teaching?

UCAS is keen to support industry and policy makers in addressing skills gaps and shortages, especially within teaching. As discussed above, we have successfully worked with the NHS to provide insights into the experiences and motivations of different cohorts of student nurses. UCAS would welcome the opportunity to work with the Government to replicate such research for the teacher training sector, exploring the perceptions and behaviours of individuals that consider a career in teaching. As part of this, we would be happy to work with the Department for Education to explore how we can support workforce planning in the teaching profession.

As articulated above, UCAS already does a significant amount of work in the CIAG space and we know there is scope for much more to be done in promoting teaching. UCAS reaches over 1.8 million people via a highly trusted brand. A UCAS impact survey has revealed UCAS audiences trust us more than the BBC, on a par with the NHS, and trust us more with their data than their own bank. Our “brand safe” environment is therefore an effective place to engage and inspire young people to choose a career in teaching. To promote careers in teaching we also have the ability, working with Government, to reach students via social media, email and direct mail. We can also work to ensure targeted interventions happen early – with a particular focus on Year 12 and Year 13. This can be done via face-to-face UCAS exhibition opportunities and advertising on the UCAS Hub. We also have specific subject guides that can be developed to include more organic content around teaching:
www.ucas.com/explore/subjects/teaching.

Appendix:

All applicants receive either the New Applicant Survey **or** the New Applicant Decisions Survey around 4 days after they submit their UCAS application. We received around 19,000 responses to the 2022 New Applicant Survey last year, and over 23,000 responses to the 2022 New Applicant Decisions Survey. The responses were weighted to be representative of the entire applicant population, and any proportion listed above is the weighted proportion of respondents who selected that option.

2022 End of Cycle data on applications to Higher Education Providers in England with applications from every domicile. This includes all undergraduate courses and a small number of postgraduate courses coded to education and teacher training at English HEPs.

Applications	2019	2020	2021	2022
(CAH22) education and teaching	47,815	46,985	50,640	52,765
(CAH22-01-01) education	22,880	22,140	23,800	25,530
(CAH22-01-02) teacher training	24,935	24,845	26,840	27,240
Offers	2019	2020	2021	2022
(CAH22) education and teaching	33,525	33,105	38,165	36,950
(CAH22-01-01) education	19,760	18,915	20,415	21,105
(CAH22-01-02) teacher training	13,765	14,190	17,750	15,845
Offer rate	2019	2020	2021	2022
(CAH22) education and teaching	70%	71%	75%	70%
(CAH22-01-01) education	86%	85%	86%	83%
(CAH22-01-02) teacher training	55%	57%	66%	58%

Below you can also see a breakdown of applications by age as well as acceptances by gender.

Applications	2019	2020	2021	2022
17 and under	225	265	380	545
18	26,115	26,150	28,930	31,495
19	8,520	8,030	8,550	9,085
20	3,580	3,570	3,530	3,640
21 - 24	4,600	4,525	4,735	4,285
25 - 29	2,020	1,775	1,880	1,575
30 - 34	1,130	1,100	1,105	845
35 and over	1,625	1,570	1,530	1,290
Total	47,815	46,985	50,640	52,765

Acceptances	2019	2020	2021	2022
Female	10,845	11,580	11,065	10,715
Male	1,520	1,570	1,530	1,345
Total	12,365	13,150	12,600	12,060

2022 End of Cycle statistics applying to primarily Higher Education Providers in Scotland and Wales only, with few courses in England, where specific outcome is a teacher training qualification.

As the following statistics refer to people studying postgraduate courses these applicants are typically at least 21 when accepted.

Acceptances	2019	2020	2021	2022
21-24	945	1,025	990	1,445
25-29	790	825	810	870
30-34	320	380	315	375
35 and over	530	595	515	555
Total	2,590	2,830	2,630	3,250

Acceptances	2019	2020	2021	2022
Female	1,915	2,085	1,950	2,365
Male	675	745	680	885
Total	2,590	2,830	2,630	3,250

April 2023