



UNIVERSITIES
ADMISSIONS CENTRE



Annual Report

2015–16

Annual Report 2015–16

The UAC Annual Report 2015–16 gives an overview of the operations of the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) for the admissions year 2015–16 and includes highlights of that year.



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Foreword from the Chair

The 2015–16 financial year continued to be a busy one for the UAC Board, marked by a major change for UAC, its management and governance. It has been a period of transition and growth, but also one of consolidation, of strengthening our existing services and providing a solid foundation on which to build and move forward to meet the ever-growing challenges of a changing tertiary education sector.

The year also marked a period of renewal for the UAC Board itself. A new company secretary joined the UAC Board, as did Directors with backgrounds outside the higher education sector, all of whom provide important expertise and fresh perspectives.

My role as Chair of the UAC Board concluded at the end of June 2016.

It has been a privilege to serve on the UAC Board, as a Director and, most recently, as the Chair. I would like to personally thank all the Directors with whom I have served for their support, diligence and wise counsel. In fact, the end of my term as Chair also marked the end of more than a decade-long association with UAC, over which time I have seen the company go from strength to strength.

The incoming Chair, Professor Andrew Parfitt, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle, has been a Board Director for several years and will provide continuity and guidance as UAC pursues future success. In December 2016, he will commence in a new role as Provost of the University of Technology Sydney, for which I wish him all the very best.

The appointment of Dr David Christie as Managing Director of UAC in March 2015 has brought a much-needed focus to UAC's strategic initiatives. While there is still much to be done, I am confident that Dr Christie – together with the new Chair of the UAC Board, the Board Directors, and UAC's management team and staff – is well-placed to continue to meet the demands of UAC's growing business in admissions and the needs of its diverse clients and constituents.

Thank you to the UAC Board for its hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to UAC's ongoing growth and success.

Mr Bruce Lines
Chair, UAC Board



Managing Director's report



The past year has been one of considerable change for the higher education sector. We saw the tempering of domestic student demand from the strong growth of recent years, record levels of international students and renewed interest from the sector, the media and government in university admission practices.

UAC developed its four-year strategic plan during the year. The plan outlines UAC's immediate operational priorities and ambitious long-term directions. It provides clarity of direction for UAC's employees, primary stakeholders and shareholder. Additionally, it places UAC in a broader context and allows us to continue to engage effectively with our partners and provide services that add value to those partners and their prospective students. We have already started to observe the positive effects of the redirection of UAC's strategy, with an increase in the volume of business through institutional clients.

This year we undertook various initiatives that contributed to the renewal of UAC's direction and purpose, including reviewing the existing model for undergraduate admissions. Recognising the continued rise in prominence of digital technologies, UAC focused on improving the admission experience for prospective students in addition to initiating development of customised applications and digital platforms for institutions. As a result, we continued to grow our existing market share by implementing UAC Connect, a bespoke admissions solution for our institutional clients. We also launched My UAC, a free app designed to improve the mobile experience of prospective students.

Since commencing as UAC's Managing Director in 2015, it has been my great privilege to work alongside Mr Bruce Lines, outgoing Chair of the UAC Board. His contribution to UAC has been invaluable over an extended period. I wish him all the best in his future endeavours. UAC's management team and I are looking forward to working with the incoming Chair, Professor Andrew Parfitt, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle, who has been a Board Director since 2014 and will provide continuity of leadership for UAC during the year ahead.

I am deeply thankful to the UAC Board, our stakeholders and prospective students for their continued interest and personal investment in UAC. I would also like to acknowledge UAC staff for their daily commitment to achieving the best outcomes for our stakeholders and prospective applicants.

As the higher education sector continues to evolve, I am optimistic about our ability to identify opportunities in the broader environment and to sustain UAC's reputation as the trusted partner in admissions services.

Dr David Christie
UAC Managing Director

Corporate governance

UAC's corporate governance framework enables the company to meet expectations of transparency, probity, accountability and integrity. It includes a compliance register which is formally reviewed by departments on an annual basis. UAC's risk management framework focuses on risk identification, risk mitigation and integrating risk management into business planning and operations.

The UAC Board is UAC's prime decision-making body. The Board determines UAC's strategies for operations and future development, and oversees risks, internal controls and regulatory activities. The Board is accountable to the New South Wales Vice-Chancellors' Committee for overall company performance.

The Board receives advice from:

- the executive team at UAC, which monitors the management and performance of UAC and provides advice on corporate and strategic issues as needed
- the Audit Committee, which provides independent assurance to the UAC Board on the adequacy of UAC's governance processes, financial reporting, risk management, control frameworks and external reporting obligations.

UAC's external auditor is the Auditor-General of New South Wales. The Auditor-General provides an independent opinion on whether UAC's financial statements are true and fair and comply with applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

UAC Board 2015–16

Chair

Mr Bruce Lines

BA (Hons) CQU, MPubPol Deakin, MBA Canberra, GAICD
Chief Operating Officer and Vice-President (Services and Resources)

The University of Adelaide

Appointed July 2009 (Appointed Chair January 2013)

A leading university administrator with significant finance and change management experience, Bruce's career in higher education began at the University of Queensland, where he performed a number of policy and academic administration roles.

In 2003, Bruce was appointed Director, Student Services at the University of Canberra (UC). In 2008 he led a major change management project, which ultimately led to the establishment of UC's procurement function and multiple outsourcing initiatives. He was appointed Registrar in 2009 and Vice-President, Operations in 2013.

Bruce joined the University of Adelaide in December 2014 as Chief Operating Officer and Vice-President, Services and Resources.

Over the course of his career Bruce has presented conference papers and published in areas relating to tertiary education management. He has previously chaired the Board of the University of Canberra Union (UC Union) and also served on the Board of the Queensland Theatre Company.

In 2006 Bruce was awarded a Carrick Institute Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning, relating to his oversight of VET to UC pathway programs.

Other members

Professor Attila Brungs

(NSWVCC representative and Deputy Chair)

Vice-Chancellor and President

University of Technology Sydney

Appointed February 2015

Professor Peter Booth

Alternate Director for Attila Brungs

Provost and Senior Vice-President

University of Technology Sydney

Appointed February 2015

Professor Andrew Parfitt

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

University of Newcastle

Appointed August 2014

Professor Joan Cooper

Academic Adviser (Special Projects)

UNSW Australia

February 2009 – December 2015

Mr Damien Israel

Chief Finance Officer

University of Wollongong

Appointed July 2011

Ms Shaneen McGlinchey

Academic Registrar

Western Sydney University

Appointed June 2007

Mr Scott Nichols (Chair, Users Committee)

Director, Student Administration and Planning

University of Canberra

Appointed September 2014

Dr David Christie

UAC Managing Director

Appointed March 2015

Ms Claire Hopkins
 Consulting Services
 Appointed January 2016

Ms Nicole Grainger-Marsh
 Consulting Services
 Appointed January 2016

Officer

Ms Louise Hicks (Company Secretary)
 Appointed January 2016

Mr John Pegg (Company Secretary)
 August 1995 – December 2015

Organisational structure

NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NSWVCC)

Comprises the Vice-Chancellor from each NSW/ACT university

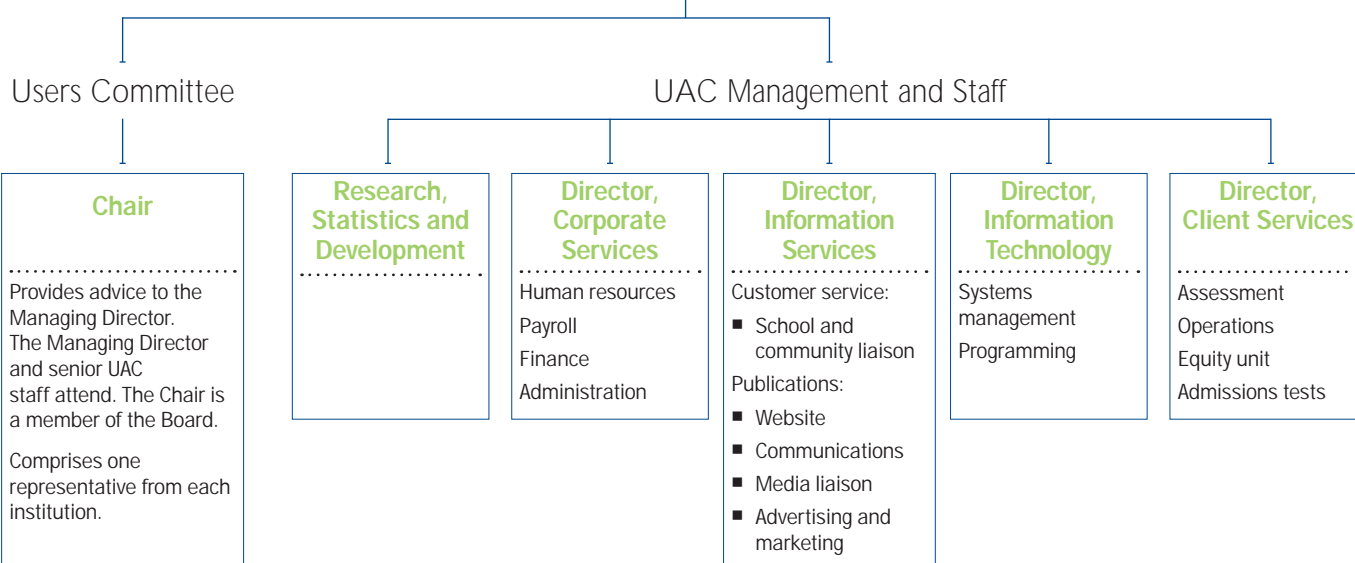
UAC Board

Comprises:

- seven nominees of the NSWVCC (including one current Vice-Chancellor)
- Chair, Users Committee
- Managing Director, UAC

UAC Managing Director

Dr David Christie



About UAC

UAC – the Universities Admissions Centre – was established in 1995 and is the largest tertiary admissions centre in Australia. Owned by universities in NSW and the ACT, our mission is to provide excellence in admissions services and promote equity of access to tertiary education. Central to that mission is our belief in the value of education and our commitment to providing opportunities in higher education for all members of our community. We are not-for-profit and driven by a strong culture of servicing the needs of our stakeholders.

Institutions for 2015–16

Participating

In the 2015–16 admissions period, UAC worked with 32 participating institutions, which together offered over 1,900 courses.

UAC's participating institutions were:

- APM College of Business and Communication
- Australasian College of Natural Therapies
- Australian Catholic University
- Australian College of Applied Psychology
- Australian Maritime College
- Australian National College of Beauty*
- Australian National University
- Billy Blue College of Design
- CATC Design School*
- Charles Sturt University
- CQUniversity
- Griffith University
- International College of Management, Sydney
- Jansen Newman Institute
- La Trobe University
- Macleay College
- Macquarie University
- MIT Sydney
- National Art School
- SAE Creative Media Institute
- SIBT
- Southern Cross University
- University of Canberra
- University of New England

- University of Newcastle
- University of Sydney
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Western Sydney
- University of Wollongong
- UNSW Australia
- UNSW Canberra at ADFA
- William Blue College of Hospitality Management

**new in 2015–16*

Apply direct

UAC publishes general information and course listings for other approved higher education providers. This information appears in the *UAC Guide 2015–16* and on UAC's website, but applications to the courses are not processed or assessed by UAC. Applicants apply directly to these institutions.

The following 15 institutions were apply direct institutions in 2015–16:

- Academy of Information Technology
- Academy of Interactive Entertainment
- Academy of Music and Performing Arts
- Alphacrucis College
- Aspire Institute*
- Australian College of Physical Education
- Australian Film, Television and Radio School
- Canberra Institute of Technology
- Endeavour College of Natural Health
- Excelsia College
- JMC Academy
- TAFE NSW Higher Education
- The University of Notre Dame Australia
- UOW College*
- William Angliss Institute

**new in 2015–16*

Management

UAC's major policies are determined by the UAC Board, which reports to the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee. The day-to-day activities of UAC are the responsibility of the Managing Director. See page 5 for UAC's organisational structure and relationships.

UAC in numbers 2015–16

Participating institutions



Apply direct institutions



ATAR Advice Notices sent



Undergraduate



Courses offered



Domestic applications



Domestic offers



International applications



International offers



Postgraduate



Courses offered



Domestic applications



Domestic offers



Equity



Equity Scholarship applications



Equity Scholarships offered



Educational Access Scheme applications



Schools Recommendation Schemes applications



Customer Service from 5 August 2015 – 20 July 2016



Students, teachers, careers advisers and parents reached through community engagement



Phone calls



Emails



Social media queries



STAT

Candidates



QAS

People assessed



Corporate objectives

Strategic plan 2016–2020

The UAC Strategic Plan 2016–2020 builds on over 30 years of developing and providing robust, innovative and flexible processes and systems to support admission into higher education. The outsourcing of admissions process to UAC has been both efficient and expedient for universities, enabling them to focus upon their core capabilities of learning and teaching, research and external engagement.

The rapid expansion of the higher education market that followed the removal of enrolment limits has seen universities become increasingly competitive. As a consequence, universities have directly admitted students in greater numbers, which has led to a decrease in UAC's share of applications, especially from non-Year 12 students.

The UAC Strategic Plan 2016–2020 seeks to address the decline in UAC applications through the provision of new services, while consolidating our core and continuing to work with institution partners to meet their evolving needs.

Why we're here

To be at the forefront of access to higher education.

What we aspire to be

The pre-eminent provider of admission-related services.

Our approach

- We're curious, inquisitive and want to understand how we can do things better.
- We're fast and flexible in achieving our goals.
- We are the best at what we do.
- We actively promote a culture of integrity, fairness and honesty.

Our goals

1. Stay No. 1 in the school leaver market.
2. Provide services people want.
3. Work smarter and leaner.
4. Position UAC as the leading tertiary admission centre.
5. Diversify our business.



Services

Undergraduate admissions

UAC administers undergraduate admissions for domestic and selected international applicants. This includes a centralised application and assessment process; management of the allocation process; and the provision of associated resources, information and services for applicants, potential applicants, other interested parties and the general public.

Postgraduate admissions

UAC administers postgraduate admissions for selected coursework courses for domestic applicants. This includes the provision of a centralised application and assessment process; management of the allocation process; and the provision of associated resources, information and services for applicants, potential applicants, other interested parties and the general public.

Australian Tertiary Admission Rank

UAC manages the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), including online release, the production and distribution of ATAR Advice Notices, management of the ATAR Enquiry Centre and the provision of associated resources for students, teachers, parents and the general public.

Qualifications Assessment Service

UAC's online Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS) allows potential applicants to have their qualifications assessed before they apply for tertiary study.

Special Tertiary Admissions Test

UAC administers the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) Multiple Choice and Written English, including the provision of a centralised application process, test venues and supervisors.

Equity

Educational Access Schemes

Most of UAC's participating institutions offer Educational Access Schemes (EAS) to assist students who have experienced long-term educational disadvantage gain admission to tertiary study. UAC administers all EAS applications on behalf of institutions, including the provision of centralised applications and assessment, the distribution of eligibility letters and the provision of associated resources, information and services.

Equity Scholarships

Equity Scholarships (ES) assist financially disadvantaged students with the costs associated with tertiary study. UAC administers ES for UAC applicants and current university students, including the provision of centralised applications and assessment, offer processes and the provision of associated publications, information and services.

Schools Recommendation Schemes

Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS) are one way institutions make early offers to current Australian Year 12 students who have applied for undergraduate admission through UAC. SRS applications are assessed centrally at UAC using criteria other than (or in addition to) the ATAR, including school recommendations, senior secondary studies, personal awards and achievements.

Bridges to Higher Education

UAC is a proud partner of Bridges to Higher Education (bridges.nsw.edu.au), an initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government which aims to widen participation in higher education from communities currently under-represented.

Make Your Mark

UAC developed and continues to be associated with makeyourmark.edu.au, a website designed to build aspirations among under-represented communities and provide key information for people looking to undertake tertiary study for the first time.

Bespoke admissions solutions

UAC Connect is a bespoke solution that provides full coverage of the admissions process from application to offer generation. It involves the integration of three key systems currently servicing undergraduate, postgraduate and international admissions: online application, expert management functionality and data warehouse.

The ATAR

Each year more than 55,000 school leavers apply through UAC for admission to courses offered by universities in NSW and the ACT. For the majority of courses there are more applicants than places. Applicants must be ranked to allow selection to take place.

This ranking is determined by the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

The ATAR provides a measure of a student's overall academic achievement in relation to that of other students and helps universities rank applicants for selection into their courses. The ATAR is a rank, not a mark. It is a number between 0.00 and 99.95 and indicates a student's position relative to all the students who started high school with them in Year 12.

The ATAR is calculated solely for use by tertiary institutions, either on its own or in conjunction with other criteria.

Calculation of the ATAR is the responsibility of the Technical Committee on Scaling on behalf of the New South Wales Vice-Chancellors' Committee and is based on HSC data supplied by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES). The Technical Committee on Scaling is responsible for translating policy decisions into processes, and for developing and maintaining programs that ensure the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the individual ATARs.

ATARs are distributed to students by UAC, which also handles enquiries from students through its ATAR Enquiry Centre and contact centre following the release of the results. UAC also holds ATAR information sessions and distributes information about the ATAR to schools during the year.

ATARs were released on Thursday 17 December 2015 to 55,736 students, 254 more than in 2014. This is one of the busiest days of the year for UAC. UAC's ATAR Enquiry Centre opened on this day and ran until Thursday 24 December 2015. The centre received 1,494 calls from students enquiring about their ATAR. In addition, UAC's contact centre received 2,537 phone enquiries as well as media enquiries from all major media outlets.

The median ATAR for 2015 was 68.70, slightly lower than in 2014. The median ATAR for females was 70.75 whereas the median ATAR for males was 66.35. More than 48 per cent of students received an ATAR of 70.00 or above.

The Technical Committee on Scaling produces an annual report on the scaling of the NSW Higher School Certificate. These reports can be found on UAC's website at uac.edu.au/publications/atar.shtml.



Initiatives and developments

My UAC

My UAC is an initiative designed to improve the mobile experience of prospective UAC applicants. The free mobile app represents a significant step in the progression of digital communications at UAC and is the result of rapid, agile and collaborative work by our Information Technology and Information Services departments.

For the first time in 2015, My UAC allowed prospective students to explore over 1,900 courses in NSW and the ACT, manage their course preferences, check their offers and view their ATAR from mobile devices.

From its launch on 17 November 2015 up until 30 June 2016, My UAC was downloaded 41,000 times. When ATARs were released on 17 December 2015 downloads spiked to 11,960, making this the busiest day for downloads since the app's launch. More than 41,000 applicants viewed their ATAR on My UAC and almost 18,000 applicants checked their university offers via the app.



UAC Connect

UAC recognises that the higher education landscape is more dynamic than ever and institutions are actively seeking alternative student recruitment strategies to meet their organisational goals. To service the needs of this evolving market, UAC is leveraging its proven technology and knowledge base to deliver tailored solutions.

UAC Connect is a bespoke solution that provides full coverage of the admissions process from application to offer generation. It involves the integration of three proven systems currently servicing undergraduate, postgraduate and international admissions: online application, expert management functionality and data warehouse.

In 2015–16, UAC Connect was successfully implemented for the University of Technology Sydney and Western Sydney University Business Schools. These customised services comprised all elements of the admissions process. UAC is now looking to expand our services in areas such as recruitment support, enrolment follow-up and monitoring student inductions.



Department highlights

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services department is comprised of two units: Finance and Administration, and Human Resources. The department provides a range of specialised services to the organisation to help meet its financial, corporate, staffing, statutory, governance and risk management responsibilities.

Finance and Administration

Finance and Administration is a diverse unit which provides fiscal and statutory reporting, financial direction and budgeting, management of purchasing and procurement, compliance with legislative and governance requirements, oversight of building maintenance, assessment of risk and insurance matters, and co-ordination of the records management activities of the organisation.

The unit provides key information to the Board and its sub-committees.

Human Resources

Human Resources provides advice and guidance to management and staff about employment and industrial relations matters. Key activities include payroll, legislative compliance, health, recruitment, training and development, and employee engagement.

During 2015–16, UAC operated with 63 permanent employees and 48 fixed-term temporary and casual staff.

Throughout the year various training programs and health initiatives were held, including a staff engagement survey. Feedback from the survey indicated that UAC staff are engaged and committed, and value their work and their teams.

UAC intends to maintain this high level of engagement by offering programs that support staff in their personal and professional development and by providing meaningful feedback to staff on their valuable contribution to UAC's success and growth.

Client Services

Client Services is UAC's largest division, comprising the Operations, Assessment and Equity units.

Operations

The Operations unit is responsible for a range of functions, including maintaining course profiles through the collection of course-related information from UAC's institutions, distribution of ATAR Advice Notices, offer allocation and notification, and compliance testing of key UAC systems. It also manages the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT), including candidate registration, co-ordination of test sessions and result notification.

Operations manages data in all three of UAC's environments: undergraduate, international and postgraduate.

Undergraduate

For the 2015–16 admissions year, 90,315 undergraduate applications were received from Year 12 and non-Year 12 applicants. This was a decrease of 4 per cent (over 5,000 applications) from the previous year, driven by fewer non-Year 12 applications. The decline in the undergraduate market segment can be partially attributed to some participating institutions taking more direct admissions.



Tim Gleeson
Director, Corporate Services



Ross Walsh
Operations Manager

The decline in applications had a relatively minor impact on offer volumes. Nearly 101,000 offers were generated, which was only 666 fewer than the previous year. The recent pattern of more offers being made prior to the Main Round in mid-January continued, as did the growth in offers to pathway courses.

Postgraduate

In 2015–16, UAC received 10,616 applications for postgraduate study. This was a decrease of 14 per cent compared with the previous year. There were 11,954 offers made, fewer than the 13,717 made the previous year. Both declines can be partially attributed to reductions in course offerings from one high profile institution.

International

UAC accepts applications from international students who have completed an Australian Year 12, International Baccalaureate or New Zealand NCEA in the current year.

For the 2015–16 admissions year, 2,550 international applications were received, a slight increase of 81 on the previous year. Offers were also up, with 4,676 made compared to 4,435 in the previous year.

Assessment

UAC's standard processing service to our institutions includes assessing the qualifications of all applicants who apply for tertiary study through UAC.

While selection of Year 12 applicants for tertiary study is ATAR-based and assessment is straightforward, non-Year 12 applicants may be assessed on other criteria, including professional qualifications, work experience or previous tertiary study. Applicants with international qualifications are assessed using schedules developed by benchmarking each country's secondary qualification standards against the NSW HSC and ATAR.

UAC also assesses specific eligibility criteria; for example, whether an applicant meets course prerequisites or English language proficiency requirements.

In 2015–16, UAC had a permanent team of 10 highly experienced assessment officers and took on 26 fixed-term assessors during the peak application period from September to January.

To ensure UAC's assessments are equitable for all applicants, assessment staff need to stay abreast of educational reforms in Australia and around the world. In 2015–16 this included monitoring educational developments in Poland, Canada, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Singapore and Brazil.



Nerida Bewick
Assessment Manager

Other services

Special Tertiary Admissions Test

Many institutions accept the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) as an alternative way of qualifying for admission to tertiary study for certain categories of applicants – mostly non-Year 12 applicants or applicants over 21 years. STAT is a series of tests designed to assess a range of competencies considered important for success in tertiary study. There are two versions of the STAT test: Multiple Choice and Written English.

In 2015–16, UAC managed STAT sittings across NSW and the ACT, administered STAT enrolments and notified candidates of their results. A total of 1,267 candidates sat STAT, undertaking 1,667 tests – many candidates sit both STAT versions.

Given the ongoing decline in STAT volumes, UAC has negotiated with the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) to undertake the scheduling and management of testing within NSW and ACT from July 2016. ACER already design and mark the STAT.

Qualifications Assessment Service

For applicants who wish to have their qualifications assessed before they apply, UAC offers a Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS). In 2015–16, UAC reviewed qualifications for 1,800 people who were then able to understand their eligibility for entry to tertiary study.

Equity

On behalf of participating institutions, UAC's Equity unit manages three programs that address access to, and participation in, tertiary study for disadvantaged students. The Commonwealth Scholarships scheme aims specifically to assist Indigenous students.

Educational Access Schemes

Educational Access Schemes (EAS) help students who have experienced long-term educational disadvantage gain admission to tertiary study.

To be eligible for EAS consideration a student's educational performance must have been seriously affected, normally for a period of at least six months during Year 11 and/or 12 or equivalent, due to circumstances beyond their control and choosing.

UAC processes EAS applications for undergraduate admissions through UAC and generates 'virtual' EAS applications for current Year 12 students who have applied for undergraduate admission and who attended a school in the School Environment category. The School Environment category targets predominantly low-socio-economic schools and schools located in rural and regional Australia.

In the 2015–16 admissions period, UAC received 20,889 EAS applications – 7,584 of these were received from students and 13,234 were automatically generated. This is a slight increase on the 20,499 applications received in 2014–15.

Equity Scholarships

Equity Scholarships (ES) assist financially disadvantaged students with the costs associated with higher education.

Equity Scholarships through UAC comprise:

- Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships funded by the Australian Government

- Institution Equity Scholarships (IES) funded by individual universities, donations or sponsorship.

In the 2015–16 admissions period, UAC received 7,085 ES applications, a slight decrease on the 7,424 ES applications received in the previous year.

Equity Scholarship applications are open to UAC applicants for admission, enrolled students, VTAC/QTAC applicants and direct applicants; 52 per cent of the applicant pool in 2015–16 were UAC applicants for admission.

The ratio of offers declined relative to previous years, with 18 per cent of applicants receiving a scholarship offer.

Schools Recommendation Schemes

This was the second year of operation for the centralised Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS) at UAC, with eleven institutions participating compared to nine in 2014–15.

SRS is one way institutions make early offers to current Australian Year 12 students who have applied for undergraduate admission through UAC, using criteria other than (or in addition to) ATARs. The criteria includes school recommendations, senior secondary studies, personal awards and achievements.

A total of 8,796 SRS applications from 837 schools were received for 2015–16 admissions, compared to the 5,447 SRS applications received from 706 schools in 2014–15. This represents an increase of 3,344 or 61.4 per cent.



Gordon Clutterham
Equity Manager



Information Services

Customer service

UAC's customer service team operates our contact centre. The centre is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and handles telephone, counter and email enquiries. In UAC's peak period from August 2015 to February 2016, the centre handled 71,695 calls and 12,742 emails.

Community liaison

Each year, UAC's Community Liaison team meets thousands of students, parents and careers advisers at events throughout NSW and the ACT. In 2015–16 the team attended 34 careers expos in the Central West, Hunter, Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast, Central Coast, Southern Tablelands, Riverina, far South Coast, Canberra and Sydney metro areas, reaching more than 103,000 students, parents and careers advisers.

The team undertook 25 engagement days at participating institutions, where they covered all aspects of the admissions process; subject selection for Year 10 students; and the ATAR for prospective students, parents and non-Year 12 applicants. The team also held information sessions for teaching professionals in NSW on the *Report on the Scaling of the 2015 Higher School Certificate*.

This professional engagement is supported by Schoolink, a portal on UAC's website that gathers the resources most frequently used by schools, careers advisers and parents into one location.

Publishing and communications

UAC produces publications to support all users of our services, including prospective undergraduate, postgraduate and international students. These publications include information on the application process and courses at UAC's participating institutions.

UAC's flagship print publications include:

- *UAC Guide 2015–16*, a comprehensive resource for domestic undergraduate admissions
- *UAC International 2015–16*, a booklet outlining application information and admission requirements for international students who are eligible to apply through UAC
- *University Entry Requirements 2018 for Year 10 students*, designed to help Year 10 students make decisions about which HSC courses to take in Years 11 and 12
- *All About UAC for 2015 Year 11 and 12 Students*, which contains detailed information on the application process.



Kim Paino
Director, Information Services

UAC's equity publications, available in print or for download from our website, include:

- *Educational Access Schemes (EAS) 2015–16*, a resource for undergraduate applicants who have experienced long-term educational disadvantage as a result of circumstances beyond their control or choosing
- *Equity Scholarships 2015–16*, a booklet that contains information about financial assistance for tertiary study
- *Schools Recommendations Schemes (SRS) 2015*, which includes information about the SRS early offer scheme.

Our series of publications for students, parents and career advisers is distributed by our Community Liaison team and is also available for download from UAC's website:

- *All About UAC for Parents*
- *All About UAC for Student Advisers*
- *Frequently Asked Questions About the ATAR*.

UAC publishes two periodical publications: *UAC News*, a quarterly print newsletter for careers advisers, teachers, parents and students in high schools across NSW and the ACT; and *Directions*, a regular e-newsletter for applicants, careers advisers, institution staff and international student agents. Both newsletters advise readers of upcoming events, key dates and scholarship information.

UAC's other publications include:

- *Report on the Scaling of the 2015 NSW Higher School Certificate*, a technical report compiled by the Technical Committee on Scaling on behalf of the New South Wales Vice-Chancellors' Committee
- *All About Your ATAR*, a booklet produced for Year 12 students explaining the intricacies of the ATAR
- *Steps 2 Study*, a flyer outlining admission information for non-current school leavers.

Online

UAC's website is the main information source and application facility for undergraduate, postgraduate and international applicants for courses at UAC's participating institutions.

Between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016, UAC's website received 1,176,991 unique visitors. The total number of visits in UAC's peak period of January 2016 was 658,198. When ATARs were released on 17 December 2015, there were 97,823 visits and on Main Round release date (20 January 2016) there were 83,510 visits in total. While these figures are down on the previous year, they are bolstered by the number of users searching for undergraduate courses and accessing their ATAR and offers on My UAC, which was introduced in mid-November 2015.

Social media

UAC's Facebook page acquired more than 7,650 subscribers and Twitter grew to 415 followers over the year. More than 950 queries from applicants, parents and schools were received and answered. Our Facebook and Twitter services are often the first point of contact for many of UAC's younger applicants and serve as an invaluable communication and issue resolution tool.

UAC's instructional videos were updated and uploaded to our YouTube channel. They include guides for applicants on how to apply, instructions on changing course preferences and an overview of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank. The videos received over 52,000 unique views and had an aggregate viewing time of 52 days. A series of videos was also produced to assist principals and school staff with the mechanics of the Schools Recommendation Schemes.

Marketing

For this admissions cycle UAC produced a new branded video, 'Invest in your future', which targets non-Year 12 and postgraduate applicants. The video features a character-driven narrative that tells the story of two mature age students with busy lives who are using flexible study options to further their careers.

Using the 'Invest in your future' video as the basis for several advertising campaigns, UAC continued its multi-channel marketing expansion, augmenting traditional radio advertising with a series of digital activations across social media and websites.

Digital ads were delivered to targeted audiences over a million times across NSW and the ACT and accompanying radio ads received over 100 plays in key slots across two commercial networks in greater Sydney. Digital signage in high traffic train stations was also employed to maximise exposure.



Information Technology

Information Technology provides a range of services to internal departments, external institutions and applicants, including infrastructure and hosting, systems management, application development, data reporting and analytics.

In 2015–16, IT undertook the following key projects.

Disaster Recovery Plan and infrastructure upgrade

UAC successfully implemented a Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) and an upgrade of core IT infrastructure at its Sydney Olympic Park offices and the Macquarie Park data storage centre.

The DRP offers the following key benefits:

- Risk reduction – In the event of a disaster, service restoration time is targeted at two hours.
- Cost reduction – The new virtual server environment has a reduced physical and environmental footprint, resulting in a reduction of operational overheads. It also requires less call upon third-party software, and reduced maintenance and support costs.
- Increased efficiency – The virtual server environment significantly reduces the time it takes to provision new servers and services.
- Increased capacity – The new high-capacity link to our service provider AARNet and its system is designed for flexibility and growth of services.
- Scalability – The flexible environment enables expansion in line with service growth.

SAS data warehouse

The UAC data warehouse was replaced with SAS Office Analytics. Visual Statistics and Visual Analytics were also added to the platform. The successful migration included upgraded infrastructure and the redevelopment of legacy SAS applications.

Software development

The software development team continued the redevelopment of the core UAC admissions system to the latest Java frameworks, and made significant upgrades to correspondence, pre-assessment, correlation and ATAR modules.

Institution-branded portals that provide an enhanced application process, course selection, rich correspondence and data analytic tools were introduced. These portals have proven to be popular with institutions and are a potential area for future growth and development.



*Dudley Collinson
Director, Information Technology*

Mobile application development

The introduction of the My UAC mobile app for Apple and Android devices proved to be extremely successful with Year 12 students. The app facilitates access to ATAR results and has enhanced change of preference and course search functionality.

The app was launched prior to the release of ATARs and became the second most downloaded free app on iTunes and the Google Store at the time. Fifty-seven per cent of Year 12 students used the app to access their ATAR results. The app allows applicants to search courses based on different criteria and to save favourites for research and discussion. The change of preference functionality was widely used after ATAR results were released.

Main admissions period

The months of December and January are the busiest time of the year for core IT systems. A number of systems reach peak load in accommodating large volumes of public access.

Key dates included:

- ATAR release on 17 December 2015 – between 8.30am and 10.30am the system handled 35,385 unique student ATAR retrievals and 5,526 subsequent changes of preference.
- Main Round closing on 5 and 6 January 2016 – 16,991 preference changes were made by applicants.
- Main Round offers released on 20 January 2016 – between 5.30pm and 7.00pm 49,109 applicants logged on to retrieve their offers.

Research, Statistics and Development

UAC's Research, Statistics and Development (RSD) unit analyses and reports on the statistical information generated by UAC's systems.

RSD's statistical analyses and findings provide the basis for data-driven decision-making and help inform the strategic direction of UAC.

In 2015–16, RSD was involved in the following projects and activities:

- ongoing development of methodology to compare applicant qualifications for equitable assessment
- review of the calculation of the ATAR in conjunction with tertiary admission centres around Australia in order to achieve greater methodological consistency across different jurisdictions
- ad hoc statistical analyses of UAC's applicants and participating institutions, as well as analyses of general higher education statistical data to further our understanding of the Australian higher education landscape
- assessments of external data requests using the standard procedure developed in 2015 to ensure data provision is accurate and secure for approved data requests.



Contacting UAC



1300 ASK UAC (1300 275 822)
from mobiles: (02) 9752 0200
from overseas: +61 2 9752 0200



Quad 2, 6 Parkview Drive
Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127

For those travelling by train, UAC is 250 metres
from Olympic Park railway station.



8.30am–4.30pm
Monday to Friday (Sydney time)



UAC
Locked Bag 112
Silverwater NSW 2128



uac.edu.au



email online enquiry form:
uac.edu.au/general/contact.shtml



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About this publication

The UAC Annual Report 2015–16 gives an overview of the operations of the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) for the 2015–16 admissions year and includes highlights of that year.

Universities Admissions Centre (NSW & ACT) Pty Ltd
Quad 2, 6 Parkview Drive
Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127
Locked Bag 112, Silverwater NSW 2128
1300 ASK UAC (1300 275 822)
from mobiles: (02) 9752 0200
from overseas: +61 2 9752 0200
uac.edu.au
ABN 19 070 055 935 ACN 070 055 935

