



**Professional Development Conference
Recruiting the Next Generation: Personal Statements and
the Age of AI**

**Wednesday 11th November, 2026, 10:00 - 15:30
Online**

10:00 - 10:15 Registration and Welcome

10:15 - 11:00 UCAS Insight: 5 behaviour trends shaping admissions in the age of AI - Nicky Turner - UCAS

Since 2023, AI technology has experienced a phase of 'hypergrowth' and AI adoption has accelerated rapidly. AI is now integrated into many of the applications and platforms young people use everyday. Wider research shows there is a shift in how people find information, from keyword-driven search queries to AI-curated answers, and we wanted to understand how this shift is impacting on the higher education discovery journey and student decision making.

UCAS conducted a quantitative survey with over 4,000 UCAS registered pre-applicant, applicant and UG students in November 2025 with the aim was to provide a deep understanding of the perceptions, motivations, use of AI tools, trust and ethical considerations among UCAS' student audiences. This session will share insights and key takeaways to take into your outreach and recruitment work with students.

11:00 - 11:30 Turning UCAS insights into Practice

What should we do differently as a result of these findings? This collaborative breakout session will explore the implications of AI-driven behaviour changes among prospective students and identify practical strategies that participants can take back to their outreach, recruitment and admissions teams.

11:30 - 11:45 Comfort break

11:45 - 12:30 Effective Personal Statement Feedback: Making 1:1 Sessions Work for Students, Colleges and Universities - Elle Zientek - Lancaster University

Hear from an experienced Student Recruitment Officer currently on secondment to Admissions. This session will explore what to consider when arranging and delivering 1:1 Personal Statement feedback appointments. Balancing what would be worthwhile recruitment activities against building and maintaining relationships with schools and colleges. As well as what feedback would most help the student.

12:30 - 13:15 Lunch & optional networking

13:15 - 14:00 Personal Statements: What the research tells us - Tom Fryer & Charlie Deeks - University of Manchester

In this session we provide an overview of the academic literature on UCAS personal statements. We share evidence on the links between the UCAS personal statement and widening participation, including work that has focussed on applicants, advisors, and admissions professionals. Participants will gain an understanding of the evidence connecting UCAS personal statements and widening participation.

14:00 - 14:15 Comfort break

14:15 - 15:15 Preparing Students for a World That Doesn't Exist Yet - Lauren Currie - UPFRONT

AI is changing jobs. Economic uncertainty is changing careers. The future is arriving faster than most institutions can adapt.

This keynote explores the human skills that will matter most in an AI-enabled world: confidence, adaptability, communication, resilience, curiosity and self-trust.

Audience takeaway: How to support students to thrive in uncertainty rather than simply prepare them for known pathways.

15:15 Key takeaways & round up

Final thoughts and discussions from the day, key takeaways from the sessions and any final reminders before we close.

15:30 Finish

*Please note this programme is subject to change