

<b>Session Title:</b>	<b>Project Next Generation – how it informs events</b>
<b>Speaker(s):</b>	<b>David Penney – Interim CMO Aimee Okafor – Head of Events</b>
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Jen Barton</b>
<b>Reporter:</b>	<b>Kelsey Blemings</b>

<b>Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:</b>	<b>David Penney – Interim CMO, UCAS Aimee Okafor – Head of Events, UCAS</b>
<b>Overview/Aim of session:</b>	<b>Discover how 13-17 year olds are thinking, behaving and planning for their future choices and listen to the views and honest opinions of our panel of school and college students who have attended a UCAS event. They will talk about how they researched their future choices and their experiences so far. Get valuable first-hand insight from your audience and hear how UCAS have incorporated this into their 2024 event development.</b>
<b>Workshop Content</b>	<p><b><u>What is Project Generation?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understanding <b>what</b> students want</li> <li>- Quantitative (online survey 1000+ across UK) and Qualitative (online forum with 24 young people and their parents) Studies with 13-17 year olds</li> </ul> <p><b><u>6 Key Themes that were identified:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Inspiration / Discovery</b> &gt; don't just assume students know what they want, support them in that discovery process. Confidence levels are low, struggling to make decisions, not given much advice at school on direct pathways at times.</li> <li>2. <b>Feelings / Happiness</b> &gt; how much does happiness play as a framework for making decisions. Doing something because it makes you happy is now a bigger focus for young people when making a decision. Are we leaning into this in university marketing? Is the overriding principle for student decisions happiness? About 60% agree. <i>The starting point is finding a career they will be happy in, and they need inspiration to find this</i></li> <li>3. <b>Experience</b> &gt; pivot to virtual events due to</li> </ol>

COVID.

Direct Exp. – work experience etc.

Indirect Exp. – mentoring, chatting to those in the sector

Drawing on past experience – parent/family experience, a large number of students make university decisions based upon their networks. This can have a large impact on WP students due to a smaller/narrower network in some cases.

Students want more direct experience but it's the most challenging to source and organise. The ability to experience something in real life is narrowing, students choosing to go to less open days due to travel costs etc.

4. **Confidence**
5. **Independence / Empowerment**
6. **Control**

**Remember these 6 key themes when producing strategies for Post-18 decisions.**

**How do we [UCAS] utilise this research to make discovery events worthwhile.**

*Video played of student's opinions/experience at 2023 Manchester Discovery – key takeaways noted below in case study section.*

### **Inspiration & Discovery**

- preparing young people before the event

1. New adviser pre-event journey
2. New pre-event student tools
3. UCAS in event support to focus on supporting Discovery journey
4. Discovery touchpoints around the event floor

- giving teachers classroom packs to be able to prepare students before attending; shortlisting questions, write down stand number not just the name to help find exhibitors

### **Feelings & Happiness**

1. Question based tools and support
2. Clearly signposted UCAS in event support
3. Student / Apprentice Ambassadors

- students are really looking to make connections  
- "oh did you go to this stand? The person was really insightful / funny"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- want to know about student life</li> <li>- how do we stop young people from just walking around the event because they aren't ready to make that next step</li> </ul> <p><b>Experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- springpod experience will be at 3 flagship events</li> <li>- subject and careers spotlights</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion Points</b> <i>(Answers noted below)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can we work together to overcome barriers to asking questions?</li> <li>2. What 1 thing would you change to improve the student experience at a UCAS event?</li> </ol> <p><b>Questions/Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Video really useful to hear honest conversations</li> <li>- UCAS can share toolkits to help support outreach sessions</li> <li>- UCAS can share video as part of the presentation but it's not for public view</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case Studies/Examples:</b></p>	<p><b>How do these translate at an event?</b>  <i>Video played of student's opinions/experience at 2023 Manchester Discovery.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"when people are genuinely happy to be there"</i></li> <li>- <i>follow what I feel is best for me on the day, but happy to take recommendations if someone recommends a stand for a subject/positive experience</i></li> <li>- <i>posters, music, singing, rapping!</i></li> <li>- <i>information packs, leaflets, FAQs</i></li> <li>- <i>drawn to the stall when you see reps talking to students rather than standing at the side/not interacting with attendees</i></li> <li>- <i>people who know about the subject and some student advice, current UG students. Teaching styles etc.</i></li> <li>- <i>opinions as well as facts, ex-students, current students, teachers etc. Facts important but just stating them isn't good enough</i></li> <li>- <i>student accommodation info, websites aren't in-depth</i></li> <li>- <i>universities which aren't well-known but could be a good match, presents the idea of it being a good university for them/to attend</i></li> <li>- <i>intimidating at first/awkward when a rep didn't introduce themselves</i></li> <li>- <i>great subject knowledge really increased views on that university</i></li> <li>- <i>bit silly an organisation trying to sell an iPad, just scanning, and then no info!! It felt like being incentivized, not about making the right uni choice</i></li> <li>- <i>student ambassadors really beneficial alongside uni staff, found out about societies, nightlife (maybe what an</i></li> </ul>

	<p><i>exhibitor member couldn't give info on)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>bright colours, eye catching and attractive</i></li> <li>- <i>brighter stall/outgoing exhibitions, more people at the stalls</i></li> <li>- <i>gifts/freebies were fun and would chat to friends about them</i></li> <li>- <i>unique facts/statements on stands can draw people in if they haven't heard of them before</i></li> <li>- <i>slacking &gt; sat on chair with their phones!!</i></li> <li>- <i>bringing people from a variety of courses would be easier to find out more about subjects</i></li> </ul> <p>- <i>more confident in making HE choice after the exhibition</i>          - <i>felt great after attending, happy and smiley day</i></p>
<p><b>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</b></p>	<p><b><u>1. How we can work together to overcome barriers to asking questions?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recognising the experience from us as professional staff, our experience (e.g. degree that isn't a direct path into student recruitment)</li> <li>- not assuming attendee's knowledge, being really clear with communication (e.g. may not know what a campus university is if you just say "we are a...")</li> <li>- some schools are already doing it, but toolkit could have question examples included for students to choose from</li> <li>- trying to use ambassadors, but can be tough due to drop outs sometimes</li> <li>- sometimes we overcomplicate it, it's our expertise to be approachable, how can we gauge students in general. Build trust (e.g. how has your day been, fave TV show at the moment) before going into the conversation about what we want to talk about</li> <li>- being friendly!</li> <li>- kids will walk in and have a lot of anxiety. How approachable are we, we have a duty of care to making them feel comfortable. It's okay if they don't come to us, can we guide them to the right place, give them some ideas</li> <li>- making sure that teachers give the correct advice, and therefore how can we support the teachers in giving that advice</li> <li>- neurodiversity, how do we consider this and support those students (UCAS have a working group)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>2. What 1 thing would you change to improve the student experience at a UCAS event?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- bringing back alphabetical stands to help pass students onto other uni's that they may be mistaken for (e.g. Uni of Plymouth passing onto Arts Uni Plymouth)</li> <li>- interactive map for UCAS app, see what stand is where in real time etc.</li> <li>- show students the video that UCAS showed us in this presentation</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more regulations and restrictions in regards to scanning. With more information prior to the event for the students about what scanning means</li> <li>- spread out stalls to reduce students from being overwhelmed</li> <li>- talks more accessible (e.g. timings)</li> <li>- more digital content</li> <li>- student testimonials (regionally) about how to make the most of the event (on entry?)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Questions and Answers:</b></p>	
<p><b>SummaryKey takeaways:</b></p>	<p>Remember these 6 key themes when producing strategies for Post-18 decisions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Inspiration / Discovery</b></li> <li><b>2. Feelings / Happiness</b></li> <li><b>3. Experience</b></li> <li><b>4. Confidence</b></li> <li><b>5. Independence / Empowerment</b></li> <li><b>6. Control</b></li> </ol> <p>UCAS are keen to work with Universities to improve everyone's experience of Discovery Events.</p>