HELOA

Session Title:	**UCAS! Let's talk about Events;** UCAS Events, The two-way working relationship between UCAS and HELOA (see Session Overview)
Speaker(s):	**Elliot Newstead, Membership Engagement Manager HELOA/UCAS Working Group, Uni of Leicester.** **David Penny and Aimee Okafor, UCAS**
Chair:	**Elliot Newstead**
Reporter:	**Sarah Booth**

Workshop Content	The session began with Elliot Newstead providing a brief outline of the **HELOA and UCAS Relationship**. HELOA now has an MOU which clarifies and embeds relationship. It goes beyond UCAS exhibitions; and includes sharing best practice and looking to the future. There are two HELOA/UCAS working groups: • Events, • Product Development Group (how HELOA Members can feed into other UCAS products). New sector developments: Working together to shape conversations and feed into consultations, such as the *Where next?* And *Fair access* reports. This session was then handed over to Aimee and David from UCAS, and the remained of the session focused on the UCAS Vision, UCAS Discovery (events) and then a collaborate/discuss at the end. **1. The UCAS Vision** David provided the background to UCAS' IAG Strategy: In the past UCAS was *Search and Apply* business. However, there were concerns that students were randomly picking subjects to study and making uninformed decisions about HE subjects. Now, **UCAS want to change to a *Discover* brand** by engaging early with students, from primary aged upwards. Covid has seen 10 years of digital change in just two years; UCAS have looked for lessons that can be learnt from this to create a better journey for students. • ASQ: change UCAS events to discovery: • IRL to URL slide: • UCAS board has a large investment into IAG strategy – to support progression in HE (Discovery). **Further explanation of the IAG Strategy was provided:** Students just don't/aren't getting the information they need to make informed decisions. These issues will escalate as the population grows and competition for places increases.

UCAS wants to provide IAG that responds to this, by supporting the online and offline journey:

UCAS have identified key 'moments':
Picking GCSEs and impact on future.

Change to UCAS brand: Traditionally UCAS have promoted the 'standard 3-year degree' option. However they recognise the need to be more neutral about options. Over the past few years, requests for information on degree apprenticeships has almost doubled. UCAS. So what does this look like? (Slide 13)

UCAS also want to reposition HE applications as a continuous journey. Moving away from a 'panic-driven process' which culminates at the January deadline Instead moving to a place where the application will come as a result of a much longer process of exploration that started years in advance.

2. UCAS Discovery
Events and exhibitions are fundamental to realizing this vision. The next part of the session was delivered by Aimee, and focused on improving the events/exhibitions programme:

Discover your future strategy: Vision statement (Yellow slide)
UCAS is biggest education website in the UK. It's a trusted and positive force in students' lives. Working towards helping students overcome challenges:

5 pillars of strategy/ambition:
1. **Central destination:** providing all the tools and information to help students find their career in one place.
2. **Inspirational:** we want to inspire students.
3. **Personalization**: Audiences expect a personalized experience now. UCAS have to deliver this with intuitive data tools to expand choice.
4. **Build a portfolio:** the tools available need to help students to articulate who they are and how they showcase themselves.
5. **School connections**: Give advisers support and insight into how students are using events and information.

UCAS are strong in APPLY. Now need to move into DISCOVERY. The aim of UCAS is to help students to discover their options, and then support them with their applications.

The UCAS Hub: Providing parity of choice. The UCAS Hub is an *always on* space where students can go to get information and navigate HE options, all together in one space. This means promoting degree apprenticeships in line with three-year degrees. The UCAS Hub is home to tools such as the *UCAS Careers Quiz*. UCAS will be expanding these tools to support student and provide that personalised experience. Virtual events will find their home within the hub, and in this sense will become

intuitive and part of UCAS support.

UCAS Events: UCAS want to create a seamless journey for students through events. In order to do this they will categorise events as *Online, UK Tour* (physical), and *Presents* (Subject specific):

- **UCAS Discovery *online*:** This is where students will be encouraged to start exploring options. These events are online and interactive. Students can watch, listen, chat and be inspired. UCAS will promote this as something for students to do **before** attending face-to-face event.

- **UCAS Discovery *UK Tour*:** These are the face-to-face events. As students enter a UCAS discovery event they will see it's about exploration To avoid students becoming overwhelmed, UCAS will initiate some changes:
    - UCAS will create a welcome area with ambassadors.
    - There will be explanations on how to get the most of the events, where to start and how to navigate them.
    - Clearer overhead guidance will be used to highlight where areas are.
    - Other ways to improve navigation of event will be used.
    - UCAS will bring back interactive maps so students can search for universities.
    - They will try to use more QR codes in order to be more sustainable.
    - Experience zones will also be incorporated so that students can experience different subject areas and what universities do.

- **UCAS Discover *Presents*:** Specialist and subject specific. These will enable students to discover the subject they are passionate about. These would be available in the following areas: STEM, Medicine and Business.

At this point I will point you to the slide deck for the session. They are quite clear and provide more details on the three points above.

In summary, UCAS provided overviews of how they are investing to create more ROI for exhibitors, what they are doing to understand barriers that stop students coming to events. As part of this UCAS confirmed they have secured transport funding to support schools brining groups to events, and that they identified some issues with barcode scanners and these have now been resolved.

They were quite clear that they want feedback from HEIs (Higher Education Institutions).

Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:	**3. Collaborate/Group Discussions:** UCAS provided the group with some time to have round table discussions on two topics. Below is a summary of the feedback following round table

discussions for each question.

1. **How can UCAS work with HELOA members to create 'money can't buy experiences' at events:**

Responses:
We understand there is the desire to deliver 'money can't buy experiences' but for us this raises a few concerns:

- Equity of distribution of experiences for universities; universities with bigger budgets.

- Its tough for small teams to resource this type of activity. Those doing one or two events could possibly manage this but the universities that take part in 30-40 UCAS events would not be able to do this.

- Universities that have to travel to get to exhibitions may not be able to lug equipment around, or have the budget to get specialist equipment freighted.

- Whizzy activities can pull attention away from talking to university representatives. This type of activity is best done at our Open Days when we have experts on hand and can offer engagement opportunities across all our subject areas.

- Our group felt that the events should be about getting information, advice and guidance. Substantive conversations at the stands should be the priority.

- There was a questions raised around whether universities should be showcasing subject areas or could professional areas be bought in (NHS, Engineering)

- We felt UCAS events are about student experience, talking to ambassadors. Creating a place to have inclusive conversations.

- Talking about stand sizes; standardize and provide consistency to support booking and delivery.

- Would this type of activity be delivered at all events of just big category A events? We feel event should enable students in all areas access to the same support and not be disadvantaged.

1. Pre -event information and support is better – to prepare for the events and to make the most of them.

2. What are the challenges you anticipate throughout 2022, and how can the working group support?

- GES: contact has been a challenge. A solution was suggested: course UCAS coordinate logistics/stand installation.
- Ordering a stand

	• Geographical and event dates providing challenges where universities have small teams • Reassurance that these events are going ahead. The messaging should be stronger to schools so that they know these are going to take place. If they are cancelled again, we may not come back. • Some universities are grouping together to run events. • More advice and support for teachers and advisers – try to keep students engaged. • What is the contingency? We need clear messages to plan. • Virtual events. • Staff haven't been on the road for a long time, and there are anxieties around how to make these events safe. Particularly for small teams.
Questions and Answers:	**See above. Q&As were covered on round table discussions.**
SummaryKey takeaways:	• UCAS strategy is to move away form just Apply to support the discovery and research stage. • Opportunities to feed into discussions around events and broader IAG through HELOA group meetings and the two HELOA/UCAS working groups. • UCAS and HELOA are keen to continue the conversation.