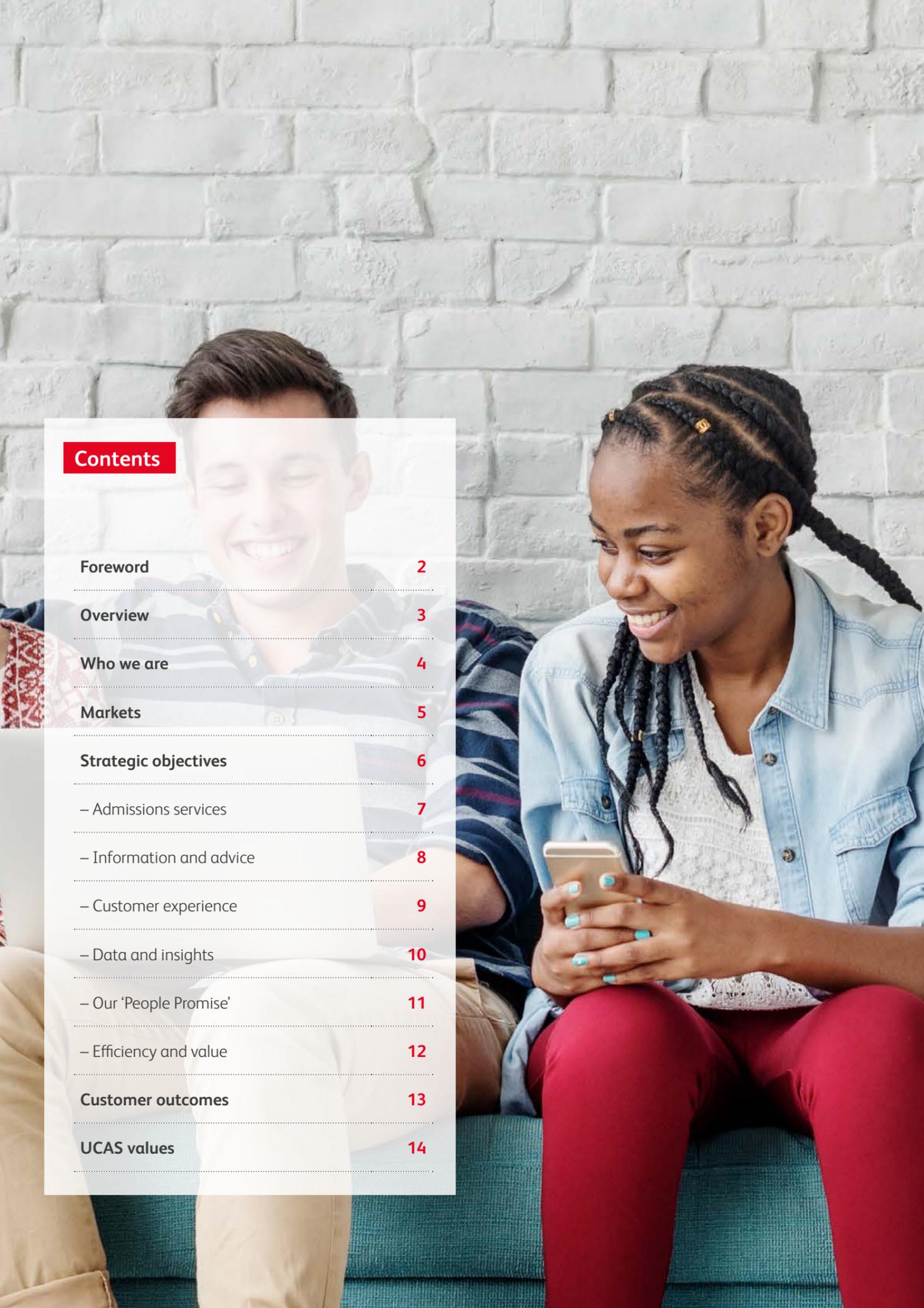


# Future Focus

## UCAS' strategy to 2020



UCAS



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## Foreword

from Professor Sir Steve Smith, UCAS Chair, and Clare Marchant, CEO

**The higher education sector is going through a period of unprecedented change, with growing international competition, a vigorous market in the UK, and a continuing focus on access. Digital advances are changing the ways students want to explore their options, and engage with universities and colleges. Looking ahead, there are significant uncertainties about how technological, data, and policy changes may shape student expectations.**

With this in mind, we have refreshed our corporate strategy up to 2020, to create a **Future Focus**, and prioritise the delivery of our services. Our intent is to understand and respond dynamically to the changing environment and customer expectations, while maintaining what our customers value most. At the heart of this strategy is our commitment to assist universities, schools, and colleges to keep ahead of these changes, as they support students of all ages and backgrounds to make the right decisions about their futures.

We've achieved a huge amount since 2015, including significant improvements in the security, reliability, and coverage of our core systems. There has been a real focus on the customer experience in everything we do. For example, in response to new market opportunities, we have:

- launched apprenticeship and teacher training hubs to provide high quality, accessible information and advice
- matured our data science capability, with overwhelmingly positive feedback on our published analysis and insights
- opened admissions data to the research community through the Administrative Data Research Network, facilitating new research on social mobility

From now until 2020, we will build on these achievements, and explore new markets, while recognising that our core purpose is to run an accessible and trusted undergraduate admissions service. This is where we must excel, and where we will prioritise our resource and focus.

We will have an increased focus on enabling customer outcomes and delivering efficiencies, whether these are for students, universities and colleges, or advisers. At the same time, we will be seeking greater efficiency and effectiveness in our own organisation.

We will continue to support UK policy debate, delivering analysis and insights about higher education demand and admissions on a near real-time basis. With so many developments – including qualification reform, the launch of the Office for Students (the new regulator in England), funding changes in Wales, and a renewed emphasis on access and participation in all four nations – improving transparency is key. We will work closely with all partners to do this, providing valuable information and advice to enhance the overall student experience.

Where there is challenge and change, there is also opportunity. Our refreshed strategy will help us seize appropriate opportunities as we move forwards. UCAS is privileged to operate in a world-class higher education sector. This strategy reflects our ambition to be a critical, valued partner in all we do, and we look forward to delivering our strategic objectives on behalf of all our customers.



Steve Smith



Clare Marchant

## Overview

### Why are we here? Our vision

UCAS is at the heart of connecting people to higher education.

### What is our focus? Our core purpose

We provide an accessible and trusted undergraduate admissions service.

### What will we deliver? Our intent

- Develop an end-to-end service ethos which reflects the voices of all our customer groups.
- Work with partners more effectively to enhance UCAS' delivery capabilities, and leverage key supplier relationships.
- Focus on how we can drive efficiencies to the sector, while ensuring the longer-term financial sustainability of UCAS.

### What are we trying to achieve? Our strategic objectives

1. Admissions services
Deliver accessible and trusted admissions services in our priority markets, that are responsive to the needs of the next generation of customers.
2. Information and advice
Inspire and enable students to make well-informed choices, through the timely provision of personalised information and advice.
3. Customer experience
Deliver an excellent service and integrated digital experience to our customers.
4. Data and insights
Provide accessible, timely data and insights to facilitate progression and participation in education.
5. Our 'People Promise'
Deliver on our 'People Promise' to be an employer that provides a place where people flourish, perform, and achieve.
6. Efficiency and value
Work towards core elements of the charity being self-funded in the medium term, by increasing efficiency and ringfencing specific initiatives for investment from gift aided monies.

### How will we behave? Our values

Customer-focused

Collaborative

Accountable

Service excellence

Trusted



## Who we are

### Our vision

UCAS is an independent charity, and remains committed to its vision of being **at the heart of connecting people to higher education**. We do this by providing information, advice, and admissions services to inspire and facilitate progression in education.

### Our core purpose

As part of this refreshed strategy, we have responded to customer feedback, and defined a core purpose that helps clarify where we will prioritise and focus our efforts to 2020. This is **to provide an accessible and trusted undergraduate admissions service**, including the provision of information and advice to help all students – whether living in the UK or abroad, and regardless of background – make well-informed choices about their futures.

In offering a centralised service, UCAS enables providers to connect with a wide range of potential students, takes on the risk of managing fluctuating numbers of applications, and delivers cost-effective services to help universities and colleges plan and manage applications and admissions decision-making. A centralised service, with a common application process, also facilitates student choice, and supports fairness and transparency.

We recognise there are many types of higher education, and many pathways to get there, so we endeavour to help those who do not take a traditional route from school or college to university, and who might be interested in degree apprenticeships, or for whom a degree becomes relevant later in life – whether this involves undergraduate or postgraduate study.

Our services are funded by the application fees paid by applicants, the capitation fees paid by universities and colleges, and from our wholly-owned commercial subsidiary, UCAS Media Ltd, which makes a gift aid payment to the charity.

### Future Focus

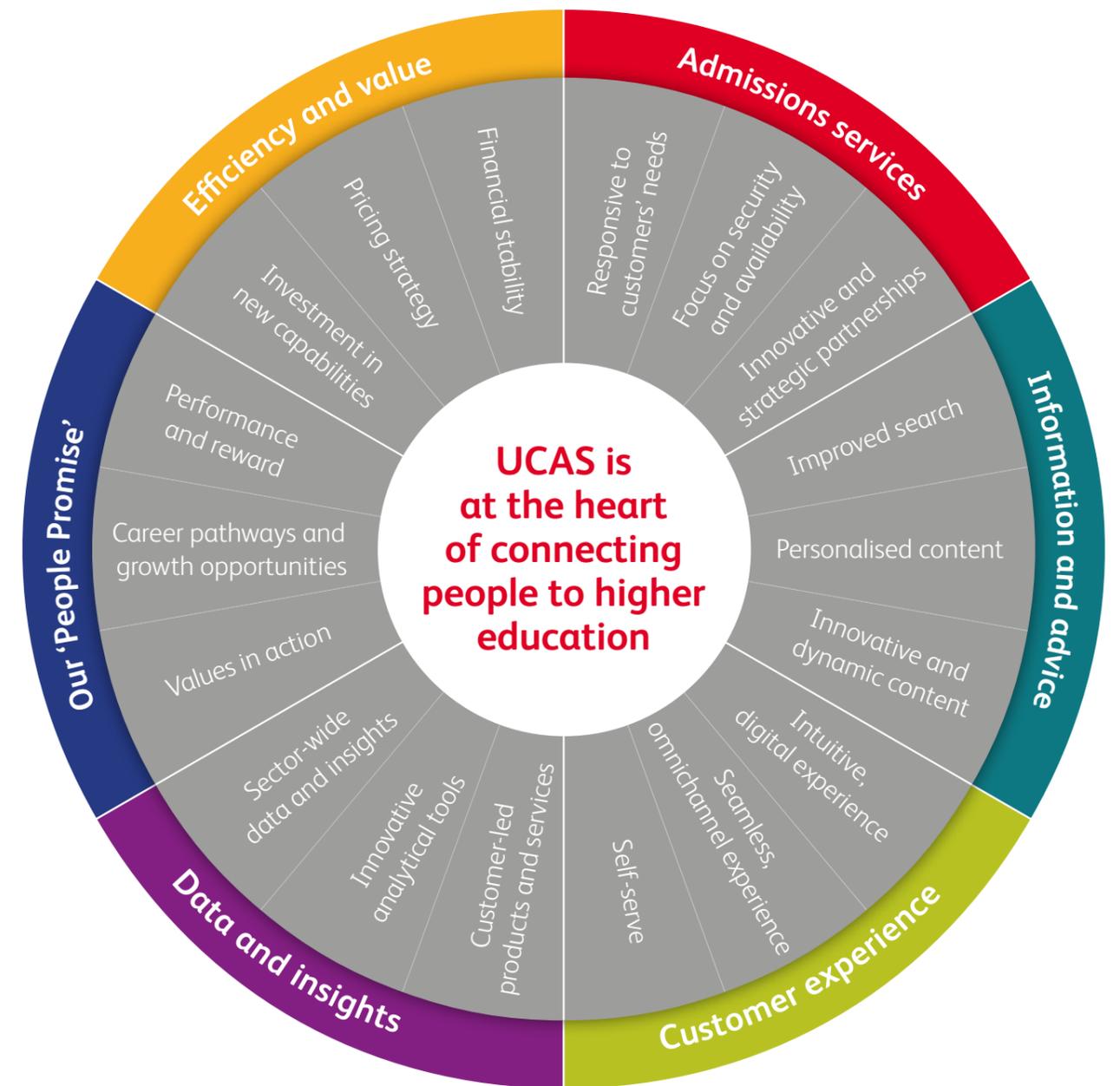
The refreshed Future Focus strategy will support the achievement of our vision and core purpose, and will be delivered through:

- developing an end-to-end service ethos which reflects the voice of all of our customer groups, recognising UCAS Media as an essential part of the services we offer
- working with partners more effectively to enhance UCAS' delivery capabilities, and leveraging key supplier relationships to deliver better outcomes for our customers
- focusing on how we can drive efficiencies to the sector, while ensuring the longer-term financial sustainability of UCAS



## Strategic objectives

We have identified six strategic objectives that set out what we want to achieve for our customers by 2020.



## Markets

The refreshed strategy provides **Future Focus to 2020**, including the markets we will prioritise during this period.

To identify these priorities, we undertook an extensive review of the markets in which we currently operate, and those which may be future opportunities. This included engagement with multiple customer groups, and the application of evaluation criteria to identify the markets we will treat differently during the period of Future Focus 2020.

Our **priority markets** will include our undergraduate service, incorporating services for conservatoires, and our postgraduate admissions service. Our undergraduate offering includes the provision of information and advice about qualifications, progression routes, and higher education, as well as opportunities in the context of graduate careers and employment.

While this is our priority, we have a series of **exploratory markets** which may become priorities pending further work with our customers. This work will include exploring how we can improve our existing services in the teacher training market, to respond to the changing environment and corresponding needs.

With the growth of degree and higher apprenticeships, and the ambition to boost technical education, we will explore with our customers and stakeholders the demand for information and admissions services, and the feasibility of developing and offering financially sustainable admissions services in these markets. We will also monitor international developments to identify and evaluate potential opportunities for market expansion in the future.

To enable us to focus our resources, we must also consider if there are any markets we should be **transitioning out** of, and as part of our evaluation, we will consider any future for UCAS in providing services around choices at age 16 (not related to post-18 options), and summer schools.



## Admissions services

### We aim to:

- deliver accessible and trusted admissions services in our priority markets, that are responsive to the needs of the next generation of customers

### We will achieve this through:

- developing our admissions services in response to customers' needs
- maintaining an absolute focus on service scalability, security, performance, and availability
- defining and delivering change for the future, through innovation and strategic partnerships

### We will measure our success through:

- market share of admissions (UK, EU, and international)
- performance and resilience of the core admissions systems

## Information and advice

### We aim to:

- inspire and enable students to make well-informed choices, through the timely provision of personalised information and advice

### We will achieve this through:

- enhancing our information and advice to enable students to more easily identify, search for, and evaluate courses
- introducing more personalised content, specific to an individual's interests and where they are in their application journey
- providing innovative and dynamic content across the platforms used by students

### We will measure our success through:

- level of engagement with students
- web usage statistics and social media followers
- volume of enquiries about how to use UCAS' services



## Customer experience

### We aim to:

- deliver an excellent service and integrated digital experience to our customers

### We will achieve this through:

- making it easier for our customers to access and use our systems, through an intuitive digital experience
- delivering a seamless, omnichannel experience, regardless of entry point, channel, or device
- enabling customers to self-serve to resolve issues themselves

### We will measure our success through:

- customer satisfaction
- ability to self-serve
- response times to customer enquiries

## Data and insights

### We aim to:

- provide accessible, timely data and insights to facilitate progression and participation in education

### We will achieve this through:

- publishing timely, sector-wide data, analysis, and insights about UK admissions and participation
- developing innovative analytical tools and services to support widening participation and fair access, and to support potential applicants in their decision-making
- providing a suite of customer-led data products and services through UCAS Media

### We will measure our success through:

- stakeholder and customer usage of UCAS' analysis and insights
- downloads of data and analytical reports
- customer acquisition and retention

## 2020 strategic objectives

## 2020 strategic objectives



## Our 'People Promise'

### We aim to:

- deliver on our promise to be an employer that provides a place where people flourish, perform, and achieve

### We will achieve this through:

- providing a performance framework that measures and rewards success
- developing clear career pathways and growth opportunities
- ensuring all our leaders are role models for the UCAS values in action
- offering learning academies linked to career frameworks, and promoting a balanced approach to development

### We will measure our success through:

- employee engagement survey results
- key people metrics
- attendance levels and evaluation feedback from learning academies

## Efficiency and value

### We aim to:

- work towards core elements of the charity being self-funded in the medium term, by increasing efficiency and ringfencing specific initiatives for investment from gift aided monies

### We will achieve this through:

- fixing aspects of our finances that may undermine the success of the strategy and delivery plan
- focusing on existing activities to deliver both income generation and cost efficiencies
- funding the development of new capabilities that are key to future success

### We will measure our success through:

- income by scheme and channels
- operating surplus for the core elements of the charity
- cash generation

## Customer outcomes

By 2020, we want to support our customers to experience the following outcomes through using our services.



### Students

- I receive relevant, personalised messages and information at the right time, and feel fully supported throughout my application journey.
- UCAS' information and advice reflects my personal circumstances, and meets my personal needs.
- I can search and narrow down my course choices using the criteria that are important to me.
- I find the application process clear and easy to use, and I know how my application is progressing throughout the process.
- UCAS communicates with me using my preferred technology and communication channels.
- I fully understand how my personal data is used, and I can change my preferences easily.



### Advisers

- I have access to up-to-date information and insights about qualifications and admissions requirements.
- I can access information tools to help my students make well-informed decisions about their progression opportunities and choices, and to make effective applications.
- I can access analytical products that help me understand my students' progression, and how this compares to other centres similar to my own.



### Education providers

- I have an engaging platform to publicise the full range of courses we offer, and opportunities to connect with and build relationships with prospective students.
- UCAS enables me to plan, budget, and manage recruitment, admissions, and reporting in a cost-effective way.
- I can see near real-time admissions information, which enables me to make fair, timely, accurate admissions decisions.
- I am supported to achieve my widening participation goals through the provision of analysis and insights.
- I am supported to achieve my recruitment and marketing outcomes through UCAS Media's services.



### Our people

- I come to work feeling inspired to perform to the best of my ability, and willing to show an increased level of discretionary effort.
- My contribution is respected, valued, and rewarded appropriately.
- I am trusted to make informed decisions and take appropriate risks.
- I understand what is expected of me, and take accountability for my performance.
- I have a range of development opportunities available to help me reach my full potential.



## UCAS values

**The UCAS values are the foundation of our employees' attitudes, motivations, and expectations.**

Our values set the tone of our business – driving behaviours so our customers experience the values in action every time they interact with us, and see alignment between our organisational values and the values of the UCAS brand. Internally, the values provide a common language when it comes to performance management, learning and development, recruitment, and career progression.

### Customer-focused

We understand what our customers want, and we act on their changing needs.

We are transparent and speak in a straightforward way, without acronyms or jargon. We seek out and welcome feedback.



### Collaborative

We collectively create an engaging and positive work environment.

We are UCAS United – working with our customers, stakeholders, and carefully selected business partners to create efficient, enjoyable, and fulfilling products and services.



### Accountable

We take ownership of our individual and organisational performance.

We manage customer expectations and take responsibility for solving problems. If we fall short, we take accountability and find a solution.



### Service excellence

We realise, grow, and maximise our potential.

We innovate and continuously improve our services, to surpass customers' expectations.



### Trusted

Individuals are trusted to make informed decisions and take appropriate risks.

We earn trust by providing impartial and reliable information and advice, operating fair and transparent admissions services, and delivering on our promises.



**Future Focus** is correct as of February 2018, and serves as the refreshed strategy to guide UCAS through to 2020, at which point it will be revisited. One way we will track our progress is through the annual publication of the UCAS Impact Report, as well as tracking key performance indicators through our annual cycle.

We would love to hear your feedback on this strategy. Please email [communications@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:communications@ucas.ac.uk) to let us know your thoughts.

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### UCAS

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The UCAS logo is displayed in a white trapezoidal shape at the bottom right of the page. The letters 'UCAS' are in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter 'A' is stylized with a red triangle pointing upwards from its center.