



ANNUAL REPORT 2016–17

'We believe in the value of education and are committed to providing opportunities to access higher education for all.'

UAC has spent more than 30 years developing and providing robust, innovative and flexible processes and systems to support admission into higher education.



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Foreword from the Chair

Professor Andrew Parfitt
Chair, UAC Board
Provost and Senior Vice-President
University of Technology Sydney



It gives me great pleasure to introduce UAC's Annual Report 2016–17, the first since my appointment as Chair in July 2016.

I would like to acknowledge my predecessor, Mr Bruce Lines, who made a significant contribution to UAC during his long association with the organisation. Mr Lines' capable and diligent governance helped shape the UAC of today – a resilient and dynamic organisation driven by a strong culture of service.

During the year we also farewelled Deputy Chair Professor Attila Brungs, Professor Peter Booth and Ms Shaneen McGlinchey. On behalf of the Board, I thank them for their dedication to the organisation and wish them well in their future pursuits.

The UAC Board has been reinvigorated by the appointments of three new directors: Professor Tyrone Carlin, Mr Robert Chard and Professor Caroline McMillen, who stepped into the role of Deputy Chair in January 2017. I welcome the opportunity to collaborate with them as we pursue UAC's strategic goals.

UAC's long-term goal is to provide a comprehensive range of admission services to our partner universities and higher education providers in a way that reflects the dynamic and changing higher education landscape. Our aim is to facilitate efficient ways for students to access information about higher education study options and to provide the tools and resources to manage the process of assessment, selection and offers. We are also adapting our business to offer a diverse range of models by which these services are provided.

With increasing public scrutiny of admission standards and the application of regulatory and other frameworks to make university admissions more transparent and consistent, UAC is evolving its business to better serve the information and reporting needs of universities and higher education providers and will continue to work with our stakeholders around a range of data and information solutions.

Having served as a director since August 2014, I have witnessed UAC maintain its strong growth momentum under challenging sector conditions. I am looking forward to working closely with the Board to address the challenges and opportunities of our evolving sector.

Managing Director's report

Dr David Christie
UAC Managing Director



Against a backdrop of increasing competition in the higher education sector and the changing landscape of admissions, I'm pleased to report that UAC experienced strong demand for its products and services in the 2016–17 financial year.

During the year, UAC expanded its business model to reflect more closely the needs and expectations of prospective students, institutional clients, government and other stakeholders. Digital transformation was a key element supporting this change, particularly the development of UAC Connect, our digital platform for institutional clients, in addition to significant improvements to UAC's existing platform for prospective students.

UAC welcomed the government's plans to establish transparent, comparable information on higher education admission requirements and processes. As a member of the Implementation Working Group of the Higher Education Standards Panel, I've had the privilege of consulting with key stakeholders, and have witnessed firsthand the genuine support for positive change in admissions across the sector. UAC is fully committed to improving the transparency of admissions systems and to making them more nationally consistent, which will benefit not only prospective students, but also the sector, the government and the community.

Our focus on automation and continuous improvement has seen us remain at the forefront of innovation in tertiary admissions. Importantly, this year we developed a new model for domestic undergraduate admissions that will come into effect in the 2017–18 admissions period. We also made significant progress towards the digitisation of major client-facing processes, providing prospective students with intelligent interfaces by which to access information and manage their applications, and building bespoke digital services for institutions to support their recruitment and admissions requirements.

A change in management structure strengthened our digital, business development, client relationship and analytics capabilities.

These changes form part of the first steps of the ongoing transformation of UAC. Committing extra resources to these areas has enabled our institutional partners to adopt and expand their use of the UAC Connect platform. Signalling the strong interest in this new service, we now have successfully broadened partnerships with a growing number of individual institutions to deliver and maintain cost-effective, customised direct admissions solutions at scale.

As I look back over the past year, I'm ever mindful of the contributions that the UAC Board, the management team and all staff members make to UAC. I'm proud to lead a team who are experts in their field, enthusiastic and committed to their work. Together, I'm confident we can propel UAC forward in new and exciting ways.

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, and
- 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 assessment of whether UAC's financial statements are true and fair and comply with applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

UAC Board 2016–17

Chair

Professor Andrew Parfitt
Provost and Senior Vice-President
University of Technology Sydney
Appointed August 2014
(Appointed Chair 1 July 2016)

Professor Parfitt has extensive experience across the higher education sector. Prior to his current position at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Newcastle. He has also held positions as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Vice President: Division of IT, Engineering and the Environment at the University of South Australia, Director of the Institute for Telecommunications Research at the University of South Australia, CEO of the Cooperative Research Centre for Satellite Systems, General Manager of Space Programs in CSIRO and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Adelaide.

His area of academic expertise is telecommunications engineering. He is a Senior Member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) and a Fellow of Engineers Australia and has previously held adjunct academic appointments at Adelaide, Sydney and Macquarie Universities.

Andrew is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and has been a member of many government, professional and industry boards and committees.

From 2010 to 2012 Andrew was a ministerial appointment to the Commonwealth Government's Space Industry Innovation Council.

Andrew has served on advisory committees to the Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards (now NESAs) in NSW and the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in the area of Initial Teacher Education.

Other members

Professor Caroline McMillen

Deputy Chair
Vice-Chancellor and President
University of Newcastle
Appointed January 2017

Professor Attila Brungs

NSWVCC representative and Deputy Chair
Vice-Chancellor and President
University of Technology Sydney
Appointed February 2015, resigned December 2016

Professor Peter Booth

Alternate Director for Attila Brungs
Provost and Senior Vice President
University of Technology Sydney
Appointed February 2015, resigned December 2016

Mr Damien Israel

Audit Chair
Chief Financial Officer
University of Wollongong
Appointed July 2011

Mr Scott Nichols

Chair, Users Committee
Director, Student Administration and Planning
University of Canberra
Appointed September 2014

Ms Shaneen McGlinchey

Academic Registrar
Western Sydney University
Appointed June 2007, resigned December 2016

Mr Tyrone Carlin

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar)
The University of Sydney
Appointed January 2017

Ms Nicole Grainger-Marsh

Consulting Services
Appointed January 2016

Ms Claire Hopkins

Consulting Services
Appointed January 2016

Mr Robert Chard

General Manager Business Development
TAFE NSW
Appointed January 2017

Dr David Christie

Managing Director, UAC
Appointed March 2015

Officer

Ms Louise Hicks

Company Secretary
Appointed January 2016

Organisational structure

NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NSWVCC)

Comprises the Vice-Chancellor from each NSW/ACT university

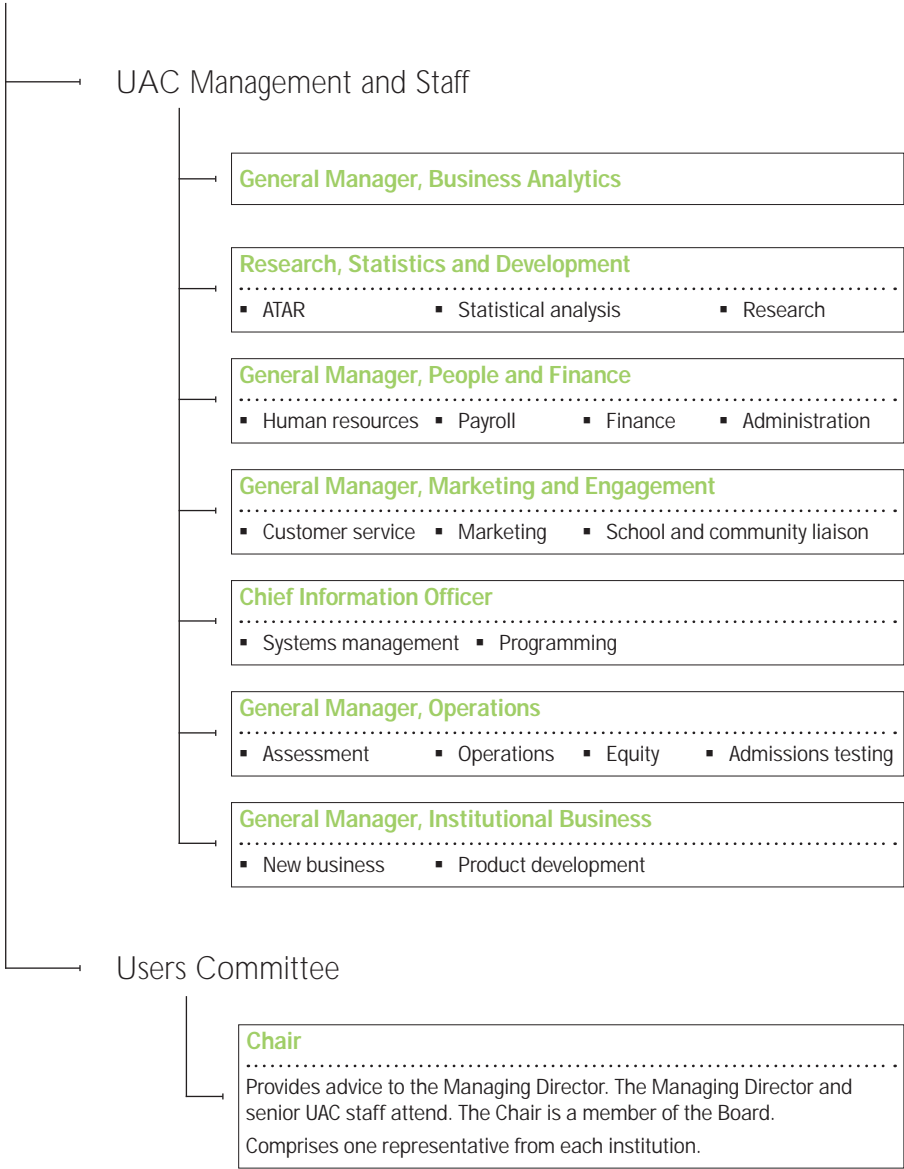
UAC Board

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 2016–17

Participating

In the 2016–17 admissions period, UAC worked with 32 participating institutions, which together offered more than 2,000 courses.

UAC's participating institutions were:

- 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 at Torrens University
- 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
- Top Education Institute*

- Torrens University Australia* (including APM College)
- University of Canberra
- University of New England
- University of Newcastle
- University of Sydney
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Wollongong
- UNSW Australia (UNSW Canberra at ADFA)
- Western Sydney University
- William Blue College of Hospitality Management.

**new in 2016–17*

Apply direct

UAC publishes general information and course listings for other approved higher education providers. This information appears in the *UAC Guide 2016–17* and on UAC's website, but applications to the courses are not processed or assessed by UAC. Applicants apply directly to these institutions.

In the 2016–17 admissions period, UAC worked with 13 apply direct institutions. These were:

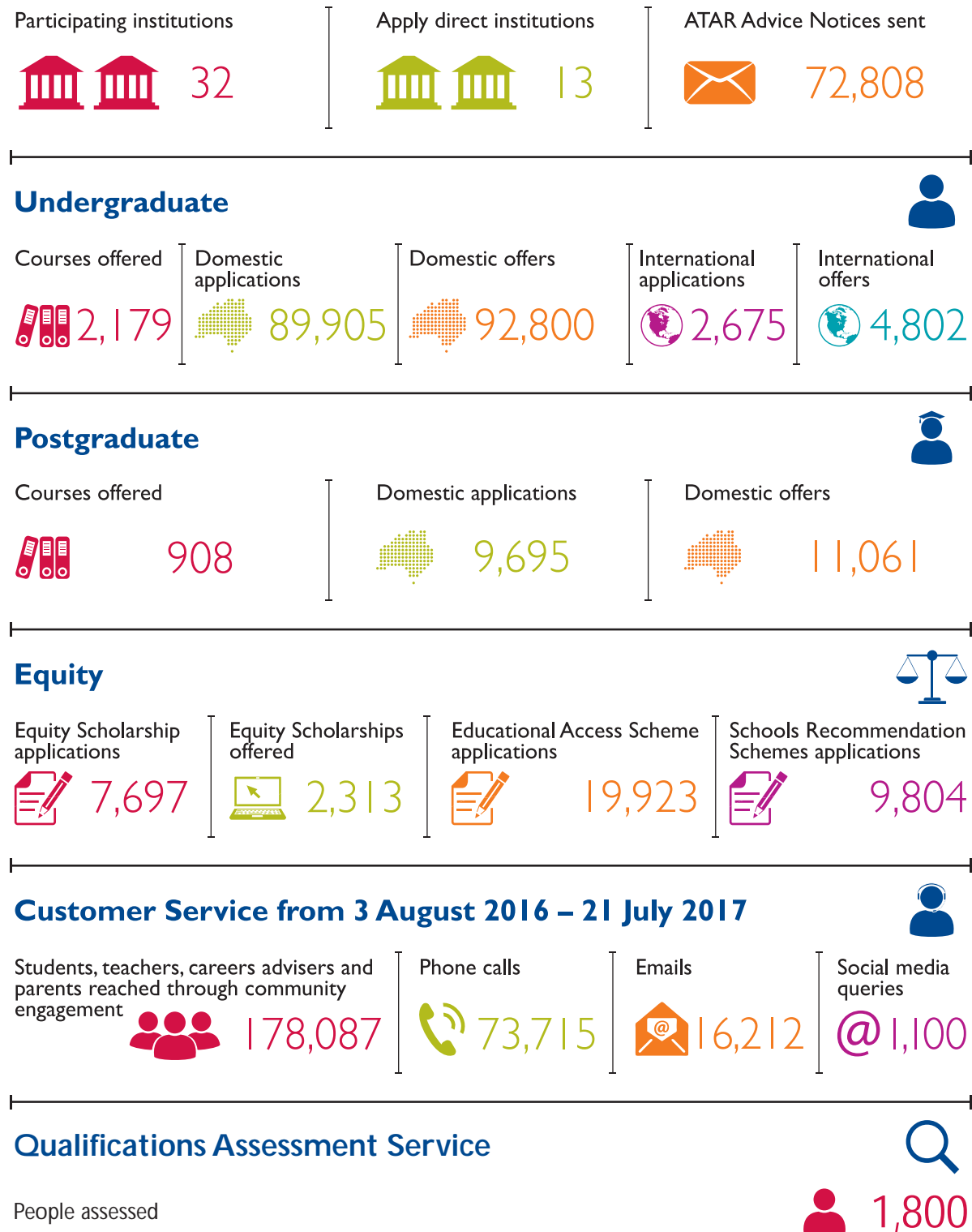
- Academy of Information Technology
- Academy of Interactive Entertainment
- Academy of Music and Performing Arts
- Aspire Institute
- Australian College of Physical Education
- Australian Film, Television and Radio School
- Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School at Torrens University Australia*
- Endeavour College of Natural Health
- Excelsia College
- JMC Academy
- Raffles College of Design and Commerce*
- The University of Notre Dame Australia
- William Angliss Institute.

**new in 2016–17*

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 6 for UAC's organisational structure and relationships.

UAC in numbers 2016–17



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 the 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.

Our outlook

We value higher education and support the institutions that provide it, and the people who access it.

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 generation

UAC manages the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), including website 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.

Equity scheme management

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.

UAC Connect

UAC Connect is a bespoke admissions 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 7.

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. The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) (formerly the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards) provides the HSC data from which the ATARs are calculated. 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 customer service 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 Friday 16 December 2016 to 55,956 students, 220 more than in 2015. 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 22 December. The centre received 1,677 calls from students enquiring about their ATAR. In addition, UAC's customer service centre received 2,540 phone enquiries as well as media enquiries from all major media outlets.

The median ATAR for 2016 was 68.65, slightly lower than in 2015. The median ATAR for females was 70.45 whereas the median ATAR for males was 66.55. 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



Improvements to undergraduate admissions

Following a period of detailed consultation with universities, we made some significant improvements to the undergraduate admissions process, which will take effect from August 2017.

The changes include:

- reduction in the maximum number of preferences from 9 to 5
- the introduction of an offer round for Year 12 students soon after ATAR release
- the removal of restrictions on early offer rounds so that offers can be made to any preference, not just first preference
- earlier release of January offers.

These changes will make the admissions process much simpler and potentially less stressful for prospective students, who can focus on those courses of most interest and avoid an agonising and lengthy wait for offers.

UAC Connect

Along with a successful ongoing relationship with UTS Business School, in 2016–17 UAC partnered with CQUniversity Australia to develop a customised application management solution for their undergraduate and postgraduate admissions in Western Australia. This included an online application, assessment services and offer generation and reporting.

This year also saw the expansion of the services UAC offers Western Sydney University with UAC creating a branded application portal for the university's undergraduate and postgraduate courses and its early offer scheme for Year 12 students, Guaranteed Entry Program.

Increasing awareness of educational access

This year UAC worked collaboratively with the NSW Department of Education to raise awareness of Educational Access Schemes (EAS) in government schools.

A data analysis conducted in 2016 identified that over a quarter of government schools that submitted undergraduate applications through UAC did not submit any EAS applications. A series of meetings with the Higher Education and Tertiary Policy directorate and NESAs facilitated discussion of the implications of this data and identified opportunities to advise all current Year 12 students, including those who apply for HSC disability provisions, that they may also be eligible to apply for EAS. In addition, the Department of Education wrote to the Secondary Principals Council to encourage them to alert their students to EAS.

Whilst it is still too early to know whether students from previously under-represented schools are now submitting EAS applications, we are committed to doing whatever we can to help students suffering disadvantage gain access to higher education.

Department highlights 2016–17



*Tim Gleeson
General Manger,
People and Finance*



*Ross Walsh
General Manager,
Institutional Business*



*Nerida Bewick
General Manager,
Operations*



*Kim Paino
General Manager,
Marketing and
Engagement*



*Dudley Collinson
Chief Information
Officer*



*Anthony Manny
General Manager,
Business Analytics*

People and Finance

The People and Finance department undertakes the resourcing and risk management responsibilities of UAC. It provides a range of services to help meet the organisation's financial, corporate, staffing, statutory, governance and risk management responsibilities.

Finance

The Finance unit has a diverse range of responsibilities. It provides fiscal and statutory reporting, financial budgeting and audit, 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 UAC Board and its sub-committees.

During the year we improved the business reporting formats for internal users, which has enhanced the clarity of information and the user's experience, resulting in better information sharing for the business.

This year also saw the successful rollout of service agreements with UAC's institutions.

People and Culture

The People and Culture unit provides advice and guidance to the organisation on a range of key matters. These include recruitment, engagement, training and development, industrial relations and compliance, and payroll activities.

During 2016–17 UAC operated with 63 permanent employees, and 48 fixed-term temporary and casual staff. We expect these figures to rise by around 10 per cent in the coming year. This level of growth will bring challenges to the recruitment

and onboarding processes, but it will also introduce the talents and capabilities of new staff to the organisation in preparation for the challenges and successes that lay ahead.

During the year we implemented a series of management and leadership programs to improve the capabilities of UAC's current and future leaders. We also successfully concluded negotiations with staff around the enterprise agreement.

Institutional Business

Institutional Business is a new division that was established in September 2016. It has strategic and operational responsibility for identifying, developing and co-ordinating the implementation of new business opportunities in order to ensure UAC's long-term growth and financial viability.

Institutional Business focuses on the continuous improvement of products and services to participating institutions, as well as the identification of new clients and the development and commercialisation of new business opportunities.

During the year we undertook extensive consultations with our customers to understand their key business needs and drivers, so as to be able to identify opportunities to better service their admission requirements.

Major achievements during the year included being contracted to create and service an admission portal for CQUniversity for their West Australian based admissions and the expansion of our services to Western Sydney University to cover all postgraduate and undergraduate admissions.

UAC also won contracts to service admissions with the University of New England and the Australian National University. These will be implemented during 2017–18.



Institutional Business also supports the Business Development Sub-Committee, which was established by the UAC Board in March 2017.

Operations

Operations is UAC's largest division, comprising the Course Profiles, Assessment and Equity units. It is responsible for a range of functions including maintaining course profiles through the collection of course-related information from UAC's institutions, and assessment of applications for admission, Equity Scholarships, Educational Access Schemes and Schools Recommendation Schemes. Operations manages data in all three of UAC's centralised environments: undergraduate, international and postgraduate.

In the undergraduate area, UAC received 89,905 applications from Year 12 and non-Year 12 applicants in 2016–17. This was a 6.5 per cent decrease from the previous year driven by fewer non-Year 12 applications. This decline is partially explained by changes in admissions practices at some of our institutions, which resulted in more direct admissions.

The decline in applications had a minor impact on offer volumes. Over 92,800 offers were generated. 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.

The postgraduate area remained steady. UAC received 9,695 applications for postgraduate study in 2016–17. This was a decrease of 9 per cent compared with last year. There were 11,061 offers made, only a minor reduction from the previous year.

UAC's international area remained strong. UAC accepts applications from a particular group of international students – those who have completed an Australian Year 12, International Baccalaureate or New Zealand NCEA within the current admission year.

For the 2016–17 admission year, 2,675 applications were received from international students, a slight increase of 125 from the previous year.

Assessment

When an applicant applies for study through UAC, their qualifications are assessed as part of UAC's standard processing service to our institutions.

While selection of Year 12 applicants for tertiary study is ATAR-based and assessment is straightforward, non-Year 12s (those who have not completed their Year 12 qualification in the current school year) may be assessed on, for example, 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 2016–17, UAC had a permanent team of 10 highly experienced assessment officers and took on 24 fixed-term assessors during the peak application period from September to January.

Equity

On behalf of participating institutions, UAC's Equity unit manages programs addressing access to and participation in tertiary study for disadvantaged students, to meet the general costs of study and/or accommodation. There were three schemes administered by UAC in 2016–17.

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 12 or equivalent, due to circumstances beyond their control and choosing.

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

In the 2016–17 admissions period UAC received 19,923 EAS applications – 7,324 of these were received from students and 12,599 were automatically generated. This is a slight decrease on the applications received in the previous year.

Equity Scholarships

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

Equity Scholarships through UAC comprise:

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

For the 2016–17 admission year, UAC received 7,697 ES applications, a slight increase on the 7,085 applications received in the previous year.

Equity Scholarship applications are open to UAC applicants for admission and enrolled students, VTAC/QTAC applicants and direct applicants; 50 per cent of the applicant pool in 2016–17 were UAC applicants for admission.

Schools Recommendation Schemes

Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS) allow institutions to make early offers to current Australian Year 12 students who have applied for undergraduate admission through UAC.

Institutions make offers through SRS using criteria other than (or in addition to) ATARs. These include school ratings of an applicant's abilities in areas of study, their personal aptitudes and their Year 11 studies.

A total of 9,804 SRS applications from 910 schools were received for 2016–17 admissions, compared with 8,796 SRS applications from 837 schools for 2015–16 admissions. This represents an increase of 11.5 per cent from last year.

Of the 9,804 SRS applicants, 8,756 were from NSW, representing 11.2 per cent of the NSW Year 12 cohort.

Other services

Qualifications Assessment Service

For applicants who wish to have their qualifications assessed before they apply, UAC offers a Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS). In 2016–17 UAC reviewed qualifications for approximately 1,800 people who were then able to understand their eligibility for entry to tertiary study.

Marketing and Engagement

Marketing and Engagement develops content to inform and engage with UAC's key stakeholders and audiences. Our multi-channel marketing strategy includes using a mix of print, web and email, as well as five different social media platforms. Each year we interact face-to-face with thousands of students, parents and careers advisers.

Customer Service

UAC's Customer Service centre is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and handles telephone, counter, email and Facebook enquiries.

In UAC's peak period from August 2016 to February 2017, the centre handled 61,002 calls and 11,694 emails.

The busiest day for UAC is the day ATARs are released. On this day, Friday 16 December 2016, UAC's Customer Service centre received 2,540 phone enquiries, as well as 179 emails and enquiries from face-to-face visitors at the counter. This is in addition to the calls received by the ATAR Enquiry Centre.

Other days that were busier than normal included 30 September (on-time closing), when we answered 1,414 calls and 154 emails, and Main Round offer day, when we answered 1,043 calls and 144 emails.

Community Engagement

Each year, UAC's Community Engagement team meets thousands of students, parents and careers advisers at events throughout NSW and the ACT. During 2016–17, we expanded our community engagement to include Victoria, Adelaide, Queensland and Tasmania. The team drove 14,504 kilometres to attend 35 university engagements, 47 careers expos, 49 parent and student information sessions and 23 careers adviser engagements, inspiring 167,043 students to study at university. We also held 109 presentations on the ATAR, applying to university, and subject selection for Year 10 students.

Our interstate expansion gave us the opportunity to build on our network of careers advisers, which has increased the demand for information and invitations to attend interstate events in 2018. 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 the one location.

Marketing

UAC produces print resources to support all our audiences, including prospective undergraduate, postgraduate and international applicants.

UAC's flagship publications include:

- *UAC Guide 2016–17*, a comprehensive resource with application information and lists of courses for domestic undergraduate applicants
- *UAC International 2016–17*, a booklet outlining application information and admission requirements for international students (non-citizens who have an Australian Year 12 qualification) who are eligible to apply through UAC
- *University Entry Requirements 2019 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 2016: Year 11 and 12 Students*, containing detailed information on the application process.

UAC publishes two periodical publications: *UAC News*, a quarterly newsletter for careers advisers, teachers, students and parents; 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 supports equity of access to higher education and produces a range of publications to explain the application and eligibility processes. These publications are available in print or for download from our website. We also produce a series of publications for students, parents and career

advisers which are distributed by the Community Engagement team and available for download from our website.

To support our Community Engagement team as they expanded their reach across Australia, we produced a new publication in 2016–17 for interstate applicants who are interested in attending university in NSW or the ACT.

Usability survey

In 2016, the Marketing team carried out a usability study of UAC's print and digital resources. A total of 9,995 stakeholders participating in the online surveys and 38 of these stakeholders taking part in follow-up phone interviews.

As a result of the study's findings, the *UAC Guide 2017–18* was revamped. The sections of the Guide that recorded low levels of engagement from participants were moved to the website, resulting in a leaner publication that is easier to navigate. Additionally, infographics were introduced to address the resistance from participants towards reading text-heavy sections of the Guide.

Another outcome of the survey was that *UAC News* evolved from a print publication to an e-newsletter, giving schools the option of having multiple subscribers. The inaugural digital edition of *UAC News* was launched in March 2017 and attracted a 50 per cent open rate and 47 per cent click-through rate, well above industry standard benchmarks.

Digital

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

UAC's website gained almost 95,000 visitors this year, with a total of 1,270,630 unique users visiting the site between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2017. As in previous years, the two peak days were ATAR release on 16 December 2016 (80,311 visits by 56,670 unique users) and Main Round offers release on 18 January 2017 (73,804 visits by 51,386 unique users). The figures for these peak days continue to fall year on year as the My UAC mobile app becomes more popular.

In the 2016–17 admission year, more than 42,000 applicants viewed their ATAR on My UAC and over 18,000 applicants checked their university offers via the app.

Media

This year the media team worked with the Research, Statistics and Development team to publish statistics and commentary at significant points in the application cycle, such as the breakdown of semester 1 applicant and offer numbers. The new



data has generated interest from journalists and higher education researchers. Launched on 7 October 2016, the statistics home page had 1,756 views.

Campaigns

UAC's Marketing team enjoyed another busy year working on a number of campaign and video projects.

Dreamers

The year's signature campaign involved the production and subsequent advertising of a short documentary-style video called *Dreamers*.

Dreamers explores the idea that we are all born with hopes and dreams for our future and that UAC is always available as a trusted adviser to help make these dreams a reality.

A key element of *Dreamers* is the voice over, delivered by Logie and AFI Award-winning Australian actor Gyton Grantley. Complementing Gyton's poetic delivery is a specially commissioned musical score which accentuates key dramatic moments throughout the piece.

To ensure maximum reach, the accompanying marketing campaign used a mix of digital signage and digital pre-roll to achieve over two million ad deliveries. Ads were displayed over 1.3 million times in three high-traffic train stations in the Sydney CBD for two weeks in November and December 2016.

A series of 15-, 30- and 60- second versions of the video were also delivered digitally for three months using pre-roll burst advertising on a number of demographically targeted popular websites and social networks. These digital deliveries resulted in over one million video views and highly effective social amplification.

UAC Connect

To promote our new UAC Connect business, the Marketing team created a promotional video featuring an overview of the value offering of the platform.

Filmed over four days, the shoot included interviews with UAC's Managing Director, Chief Information Officer, as well as the General Managers of Marketing and Engagement, and Institutional Business and Operations. Testimonials about the value and benefit provided by UAC Connect were provided by Professor Peter Booth, Provost and Senior Vice-President the University of Technology Sydney, and Robyn Causley, Director of Student Administration at Western Sydney University.

By showcasing the myriad cost, capability and processing benefits offered by UAC Connect, the video creates a compelling sales story and has generated a number of enquiries from prospective clients.

Other projects

Other bodies of work involved the production of eight 15-second edited versions of our 2014 video *'Your journey starts here'*. These edited versions were used in a number of settings, most interestingly as part of an in-school pilot program targeting senior students.

A number of pieces of video content were also produced for display at UAC's stands at the HSC and Careers Expo and the Western Sydney Careers Expo.

The annual application video guides and UAC Guide promotional videos once again proved very popular with applicants, schools and parents.



Social media

Social media continued its valuable role enabling UAC's Marketing team to engage and communicate with prospective students and provide them with timely advice and support throughout their higher education journey.

UAC's social media channels experienced steady growth during the year. Our Facebook audience grew to over 8,500 subscribers and we reached over 500 Twitter followers. The team responded to 1,100 queries on a broad range of topics from applicants, parents and school staff.

UAC also launched new Instagram and Snapchat accounts at the end of this admission year as a collaborative effort between the Marketing and Community Engagement teams. These new social channels allow the Community Engagement team to share their travels across the country and interact directly with students, teachers and carers.

Information Technology

UAC's Information Technology unit provides a range of technology-related services to internal departments, external institutions and applicants. These services include core infrastructure, cloud services, systems management, project management, application development and data reporting and analytics.

In 2016–17 IT undertook the following key initiatives.

ATAR redevelopment

This was a major project to redevelop the ATAR calculation and reporting tools. The project was designed to reduce the risks associated with ATAR processes and to ensure all tools are built, managed and maintained using the latest technologies.

Custom services

A range of custom technology services were developed to meet the individual needs of our institutional clients. Institution-branded services provide solutions that can be integrated to back end systems providing an enhanced user experience, tailored workflows, trackable correspondence and seamless data exchange. These services have proven to be popular with institutions and are a potential area for future growth and development.

Infrastructure

To enhance UAC's private cloud infrastructure we implemented full redundancy and high availability, upgraded firewalls, replaced core switches, upgraded the backup solution, expanded the computer and memory capacity and implemented virtualisation of the CISO VOIP PABX telephone system.

Security

To enhance the security of IT services, UAC undertook an external security audit that included testing of the internal network, system vulnerabilities, external penetration testing and web application testing. These tests ensure that the latest security threats are identified and best-practice solutions are implemented.

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, and correlation modules.

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 16 December 2016 – between 8.30am and 10.30am the system handled 37,258 unique student ATAR retrievals and 8,769 subsequent changes of preference
- Main Round closing on 5 and 6 January 2017 – 15,806 preference changes made by applicants
- Main Round offers released on 18 January 2017 – between 5.30pm and 7.00pm 31,951 unique applicants logged on to retrieve their offers.

Research, Statistics and Development

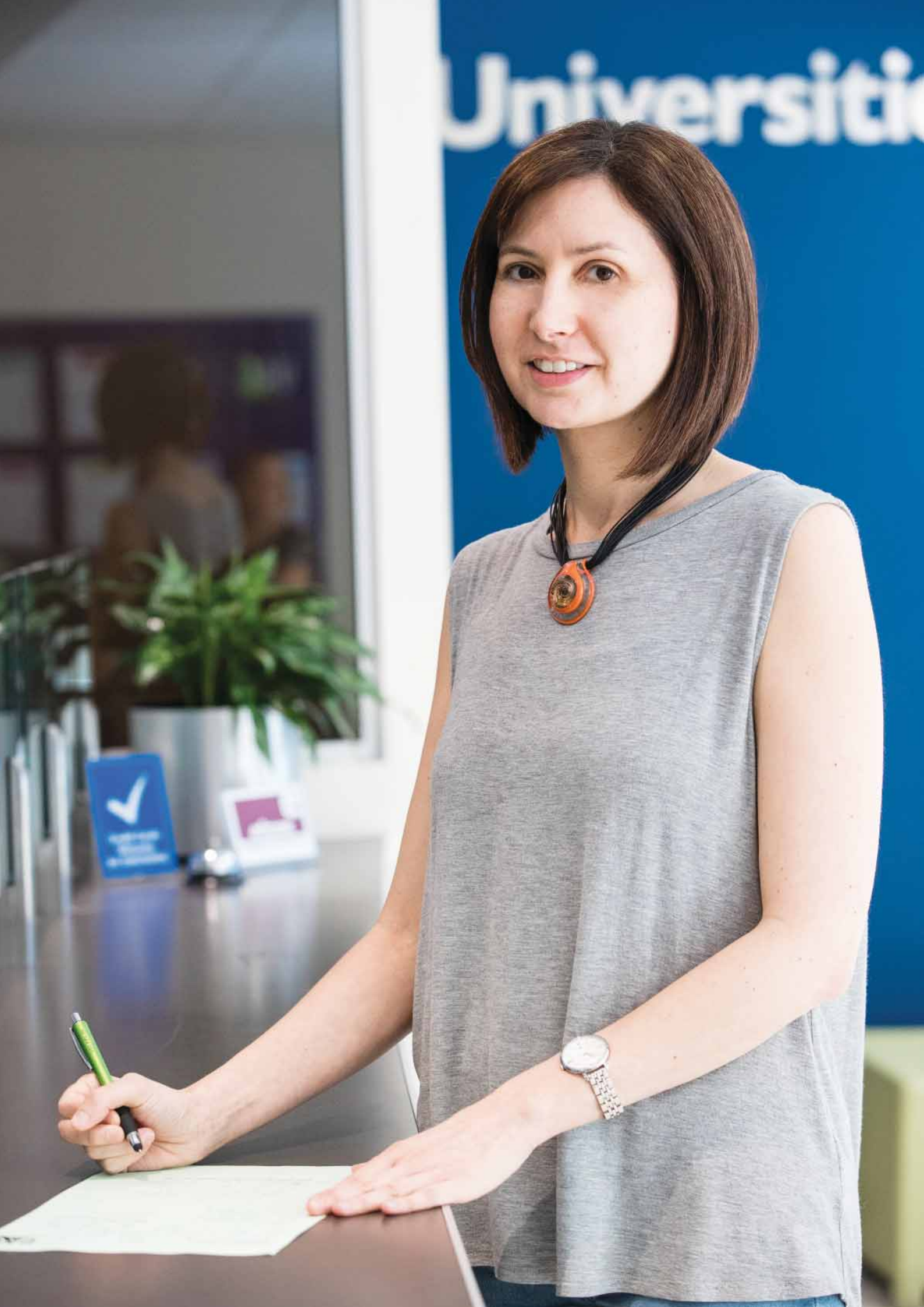
UAC's Research, Statistics and Development (RSD) unit analyses and reports on the statistical information generated by UAC's systems.

In 2016–17, RSD was involved in the following projects and activities:

- the transition of ATAR calculation from FORTRAN to JAVA programming language
- ongoing development of methodology to compare applicant qualifications for equitable assessment
- assessments of external data requests using the standard procedure developed in 2015, and ensuring data provision is accurate and secure for approved data requests
- 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. These findings provide the basis for data-driven decision-making and help inform the strategic direction of UAC.

Business Analytics

The Business Analytics unit was created in February 2017 with the appointment of Anthony Manny as the General Manager, Business Analytics. The aim of the department is to increase the use of the vast data that UAC generates, as well as to increase access to other data sources within the sector. The effective use of data will drive analytical decision-making, strategy and business planning – both internally for UAC and externally for our institutions – and allow UAC to contribute insights to conversations about the higher education sector moving forward.



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



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uac.edu.au
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About this publication

The UAC Annual Report 2016–17 gives an overview of the operations of the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) for the 2016–17 admissions year and includes highlights of that year.



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