Annual Report

2014–15

UAC

UNIVERSITIES
ADMISSIONS CENTRE

Annual Report
2014–15

The UAC Annual Report 2014–15 gives an overview of the operations of the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) for the admissions year 2014–15 and includes highlights of that year.

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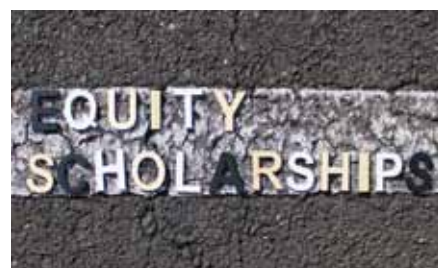
Report from the Chair

The last financial year has been a busy one for the UAC Board and a period marked by major change for UAC and its management and governance.

It was with great pleasure that the Board was able to confirm the appointment of Dr David Christie as the incoming Managing Director of UAC. Dr Christie joined UAC with significant higher education management experience, most recently from Open Universities Australia and University of Wollongong. UAC is already benefiting from Dr Christie's energy and enthusiasm and he has sent a clear message about engaging positively with participating institutions; a message welcomed and encouraged by the Board.

Shortly after Dr Christie's arrival, Ms Andrea Goodwin, the Director of Client Services announced her retirement. Ms Goodwin's contribution to UAC and the higher education sector has been extraordinary, spanning several decades, and marked by senior management roles from UAC's inception as an incorporated company. Her impact on UAC processes, systems and reputation has been profound and she will sorely missed by UAC, the UAC Board and members of the higher education sector. The Board was pleased to wish Ms Goodwin all the very best on her retirement.

With the retirement of the previous Managing Director, retirement of the Director, Client Services and appointment of a new Managing Director, renewal of the UAC senior management team is largely complete. The UAC Board was particularly concerned about managing the transition as seamlessly as possible and is confident that the team forming around Dr Christie will do just that. The staff of UAC have continued to show their dedication and commitment to results, as well as their willingness to embrace change and new challenges.

Finally, the Board itself has been contemplating renewal also and completed a Board composition assessment during the financial year. On the back of that exercise, steps have been taken to fill several Board vacancies from Directors with backgrounds outside the higher education sector and with experience in areas of need to the Board.

All in all then, the last financial year has been one of change, transition and capacity building. UAC management and its governing body are now well placed to meet the challenges of growing UAC's admission business, and meeting the needs of UAC's diverse clients and constituencies.

Mr Bruce Lines
Chair, UAC Board

Report from the Managing Director

Writing to you as UAC's new Managing Director (commenced March 2015), I am excited about UAC's potential.

During the course of the year, we helped 94,168 people choose a path to tertiary education. Of these people, 51,158 were school-leavers, which represents an increase of 1.7 per cent on the previous year. Although the school-leaver segment experienced growth, applications from non-school-leavers were down 3.7 per cent on the previous year. Although this is predominantly a result of an increased proportion of non-school-leavers applying directly to education institutions, there are also indications that the growth in participation of non-school-leavers in higher education has slowed. Although we have initiated measures to counter this trend, the effects of them will not be observed until a considerable period after the 2014–15 admissions cycle.

We continue to provide access to education for tens of thousands of people whose personal circumstances make it more challenging for them to gain entrance to higher education. This year saw the introduction of the Schools Recommendation Schemes, which support school students in accessing further study via pathways that complement ATAR-based admission processes. This initiative has been highly successful with almost 6,000 school students using the scheme in the first year to apply to study at university. We also saw continued growth of our Educational Access Schemes, reflecting the value that prospective students and institutions alike place on the initiative. Additionally, we observed growth in the number of students accessing tertiary study via pathway courses.

Our reputation and brand remain strong, as evidenced from one perspective by the number of private providers that joined the UAC network during the year. These included four new participants: Australasian College of Natural Therapies, National Art School, SAE Creative Media Institute and SIBT.

Even with our solid growth, the year was to a large extent one of review and reflection. Having broadened our operational scope over a number of years, we faced fundamental questions and choices about UAC's role in the higher education sector, especially in light of changes in the broader education and business environments. As such, 2014–15 saw a focus on strengthening the foundations on which our successful operational capabilities are built and the genesis of a new strategic direction.

We prioritised the strengthening of our relationships with universities and other higher education institutions, which are of central importance to our long-term sustainability. Additionally, with digital products and services being cornerstones of our offer, we improved our foundational digital capabilities. Specifically, we embarked on a major uplift of our disaster recovery capability, and also developed a longer-term approach to ensure that processes underpinning the transition from school to further study remain functionally sound.

We also farewelled Andrea Goodwin, who after many years has retired from UAC. Andrea's contribution to UAC has been substantial and we wish her all the best for the future.

UAC is a great organisation built by great people. With a heightened awareness of our business environment and a strong focus on our goals, the business outlook for UAC is bright.

Finally, I extend my thanks to the UAC network for their support over the year: these include our higher education partners for their continued interest in UAC's future, our key industry stakeholders, the UAC Board and Chair, the UAC staff and prospective students. The interest you have shown in UAC is both encouraging and appreciated and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the time ahead.

Dr David Christie
UAC Managing Director

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 a not-for-profit and driven by a strong culture of servicing the needs of our stakeholders.

Institutions for 2014–15

Participating

UAC worked with 29 participating institutions in this period. Together they offered more than 1,800 courses. These were:

- APM College of Business and Communication
- Australasian College of Natural Therapies*
- Australian Catholic University
- Australian College of Applied Psychology
- Australian Maritime College
- Australian National University
- Billy Blue College of Design
- 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, Australia*
- SIBT*
- Southern Cross University
- University of Canberra
- University of New England
- University of Newcastle
- University of Sydney
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Western Sydney
- University of Wollongong
- UNSW Australia
- William Blue College of Hospitality Management

new in 2014–15

Apply direct

UAC also publishes general information and course listings for other approved higher education providers.

These courses appear in UAC's Guide and on UAC's website, but applications to the courses are not processed or assessed by UAC. Applicants apply directly to these institutions. The following twelve institutions were apply direct institutions in 2014–15:

- Academy of Interactive Entertainment*
- Academy of Music and Performing Arts
- Alphacrucis College*
- Australian College of Physical Education
- Australian Film, Television and Radio School*
- Endeavour College of Natural Health*
- Evocca College*
- JMC Academy
- TAFE NSW Higher Education
- The University of Notre Dame Australia
- William Angliss Institute
- Wesley Institute

new in 2014–15

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 7 for UAC's management structure and relationships.
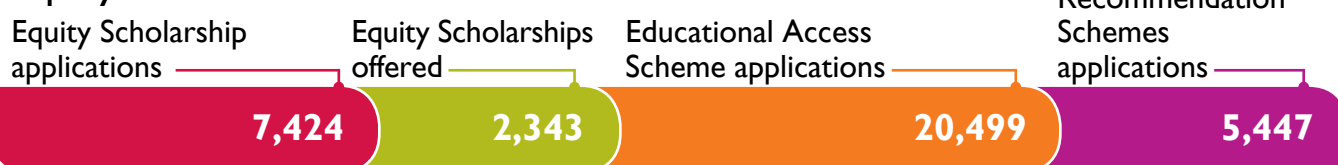
UAC in numbers 2014–15

Participating institutions 29

Apply direct institutions 12

ATAR Advice Notices sent 69,472

Undergraduate

Courses offered 1,800+

Domestic applications 94,168

Domestic offers 101,653

International applications 2,469

International offers 4,435

Postgraduate

Courses offered 800+

Domestic applications 12,335

Domestic offers 13,717

Equity

Equity Scholarship applications 7,424

Equity Scholarships offered 2,343

Educational Access Scheme applications 20,499

Schools Recommendation Schemes applications 5,447

Customer Service

Students, teachers, careers advisers and parents reached through community engagement 78,500+

Phone calls 93,227

Emails 20,943

Social media queries 1,100

STAT

Candidates 1,800

QAS

People assessed 1,800

Corporate objectives

Mission

To excel at providing services to participating institutions, prospective students and others that promote access to tertiary education that is for the benefit of all community groups.

Vision

To be regarded as the most effective, innovative, knowledgeable and helpful partner in the tertiary admissions sector.

Values

Respect and develop our partnerships

We have many partnerships – with participating institutions and the NSWVCC, staff, applicants, suppliers, government, and the UAC Board. Our success relies upon the quality of these relationships, which we maintain and improve through co-operation and understanding.

Be the best

We will strive to be the best in everything we do and bring a sense of care, skill, diligence and loyalty to our work. We will listen to our partners, make improvements where we can, take pride in our achievements and build on them.

Exceed expectations

We have a positive attitude and will always look to provide solutions to problems or different ways of doing the things that are important to our business and our partners.

Play by the rules

We value the trust of our partners and will promote a culture of integrity, impartiality and honesty among our staff and through our partners as a core feature of our business.

Strategic goals

- Expand the range and utilisation of our services.
- Develop and improve our systems.
- Maintain excellence in our business processes.
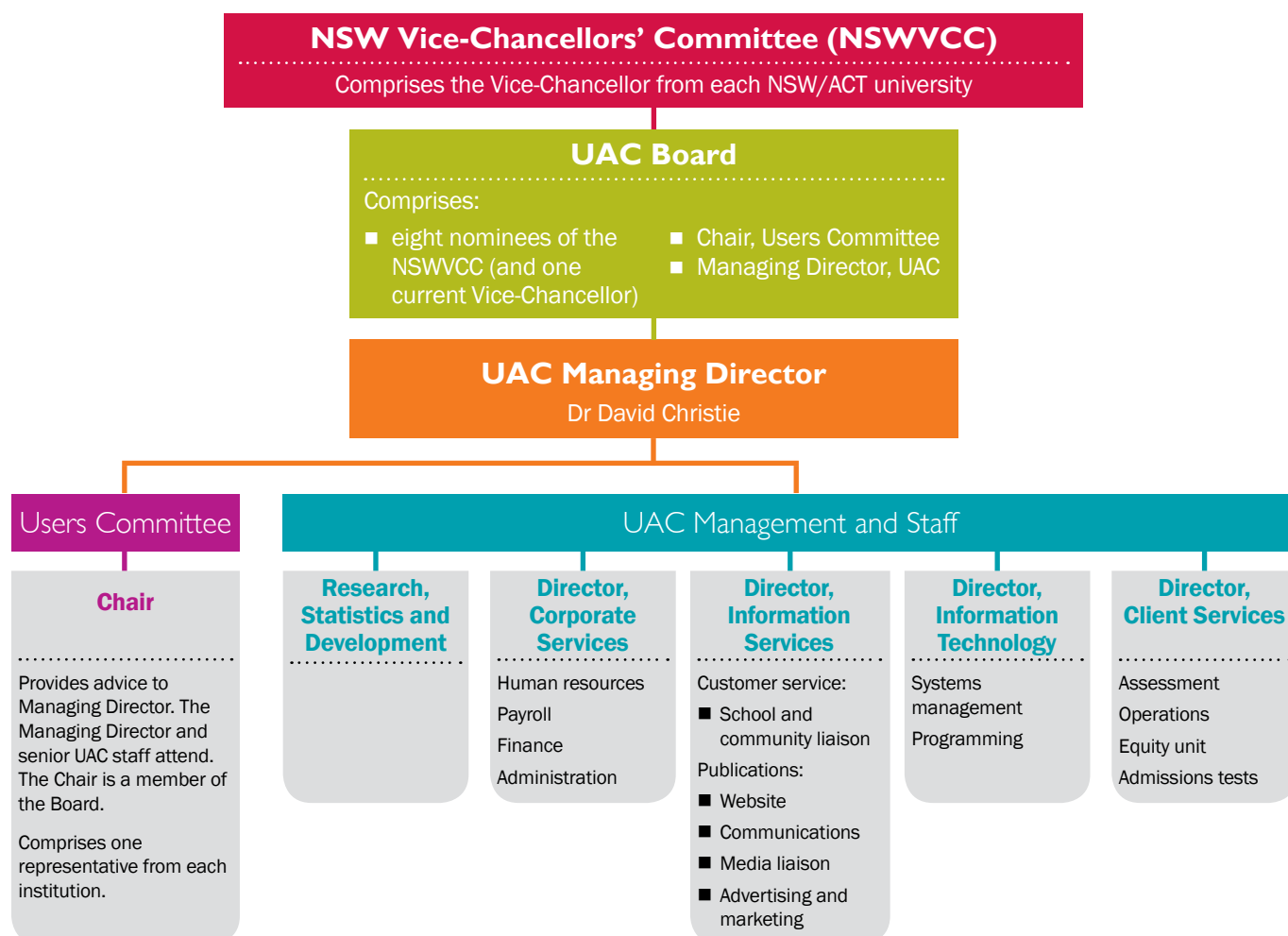
UAC governance

UAC's corporate governance framework enables the company to meet expectation of transparency, probity, accountability and integrity. It includes a compliance register which is formally reviewed by departments on an annual basis and 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 vision, mission, values and strategies for UAC 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 opinion on whether UAC's financial statements are true and fair and comply with applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NSWVCC)
Comprises the Vice-Chancellor from each NSW/ACT university

UAC Board
Comprises:
- eight nominees of the NSWVCC (and one current Vice-Chancellor)
- Chair, Users Committee
- Managing Director, UAC

UAC Managing Director
Dr David Christie

Users Committee

Chair

Provides advice to Managing Director. The Managing Director and senior UAC staff attend. The Chair is a member of the Board.

Comprises one representative from each institution.

UAC Management and Staff

Research, Statistics and Development

Director, Corporate Services

Human resources
Payroll
Finance
Administration

Director, Information Services

Customer service:
- School and community liaison

Publications:
- Website
- Communications
- Media liaison
- Advertising and marketing

Director, Information Technology

Systems management
Programming

Director, Client Services

Assessment
Operations
Equity unit
Admissions tests

UAC Board 2014–15

Chair

Mr Bruce Lines

BA (Hons) CQU, MPubPol Deakin, MBA Canberra, GAICD
Chief Operating Officer & Vice-President (Services and Resources)
The University of Adelaide

Appointed July 2009 (Appointed Chair January 2013)

A leading university administrator with significant finance and change management experience, Bruce joined the University of Adelaide in December 2014.

Bruce's career in higher education began at the University of Queensland, where he performed a number of policy and academic administration roles.

In 2003, Bruce was appointed Director, Student Services at the University of Canberra. In 2008 he led a major change management project, focusing on procurement as well as IT and business process outsourcing. He was appointed Registrar in 2009, and Vice-President, Operations, in 2013.

Over the course of his career Bruce has presented conference papers and published in areas relating to tertiary education management. He has previously chaired the Board of the University of Canberra Union (UCU) and also served on the Board of the Queensland Theatre Company.

In 2006 Bruce was awarded a Carrick Institute Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning, relating to his oversight of VET to UC pathway programs.

Other members

Professor Attila Brungs
(NSWVCC representative and Deputy Chair)

Vice-Chancellor
University of Technology Sydney
Appointed February 2015

Professor Peter Booth

Alternate Director for Attila Brungs
Provost & Senior Vice President
University of Technology Sydney
Appointed February 2015

Professor Andrew Vann

NSW VCC representative and Deputy Chair
Vice-Chancellor & President
Charles Sturt University
January 2014 – February 2015

Professor Andrew Parfitt

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
University of Newcastle
Appointed August 2014

Professor Derrick Armstrong

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Registrar
University of Sydney
July 2013 – May 2015

Professor Joan Cooper

Academic Adviser (Special Projects)
UNSW Australia
Appointed February 2009

Mr Damien Israel

Chief Finance Officer
University of Wollongong
Appointed July 2011

Ms Shaneen McGlinchey

Academic Registrar
Western Sydney University
Appointed June 2007

Mr Scott Nichols (Chair, Users Committee)

Director Student Administration and Planning
University of Canberra
Appointed September 2014

Ms Carmel O'Regan (Chair, Users Committee)

Deputy Academic Registrar
University of Newcastle
July 2013 – September 2014

Dr David Christie

UAC Managing Director
Appointed March 2015

Mr Andrew Stanton

UAC Managing Director
August 1995 – July 2014

Officer

Mr John Pegg (Company Secretary)

Services

Undergraduate admissions

UAC administers undergraduate admissions for domestic and selected international applicants involving centralised applications and assessment and management of the course offer allocation process.

Postgraduate admissions

UAC administers postgraduate admissions for selected coursework courses for domestic applicants involving centralised applications and assessment and management of the course offer allocation process UAC also operates an institution-branded application portal and admissions system for UTS Business School's domestic postgraduate coursework programs.

Australian Tertiary Admission Rank

UAC calculates and manages the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), including website release of applicants ATARs, the production and distribution of ATAR Advice Notices, running the ATAR Enquiry Centre and providing associated publications and information for students, teachers, parents, other interested parties and the general public.

Special Tertiary Admissions Test

UAC administers the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) Multiple Choice and Written English, including providing centralised applications, test venues and supervisors.

Qualifications Assessment Service

UAC provides a pre-application online Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS) for potential applicants who wish to find out if they are likely to be eligible for tertiary study or where, for a direct application to an institution, the provision of a qualifications assessment statement is a requirement.

Equity

Educational Access Schemes

Most of UAC's participating institutions have Educational Access Schemes (EAS) to assist students who have experienced long-term educational disadvantage gain admission to university. UAC administers EAS on behalf of participating institutions including the provision of centralised applications and assessment and distribution of eligibility letters.

Equity Scholarships

Equity Scholarships assist financially disadvantaged students with the costs associated with higher education. UAC administers the scheme for applicants and current university students, including the provision of centralised application, assessment and offer processes.

Schools Recommendation Schemes

In 2014–15, UAC commenced the Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS). UAC administered SRS for nine participating institutions to facilitate access to higher education for current Australian Year 12 students who might otherwise not be offered a place. SRS applications were assessed centrally at UAC, using school recommendations and non-Year 12 academic achievements. Offers are made early, before the main offer round for Year 12 students.

Bridges to Higher Education

Bridges to Higher Education (www.bridges.nsw.edu.au), funded by the Commonwealth Government and formed by five Sydney universities – Western Sydney University, University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney, Australian Catholic University and Macquarie University – aims to widen participation in higher education from communities currently under-represented. UAC is a partner to this initiative.

Make Your Mark website

As part of Bridges to Higher Education, UAC developed the Make Your Mark website (www.makeyourmark.edu.au), which aims to build aspirations among under-represented communities groups and provide key information for people looking to undertake tertiary study for the first time.

The ATAR

Each year more than 55,000 current school leavers apply through UAC for admission to courses offered by NSW and ACT universities. 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 based on HSC data supplied by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES). The Technical Committee on Scaling play a central role with responsibility 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 contact 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 Thursday 18 December 2014 to 55,482 students. This is one of the busiest days of the year for UAC. UAC's ATAR Enquiry Centre opened on this day and ran until Wednesday 31 December 2014. The centre received 3,764 calls from students requiring help with their ATAR. In addition, UAC's customer contact centre received 2,537 phone enquiries as well as media enquiries from all major media outlets.

The median ATAR for 2014 was 68.95, down slightly from 2013. The average ATAR for females was 70.30 and the average ATAR for males was 67.20 and 48.4 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 www.uac.edu.au/publications/atar.shtml.

Department highlights 2014–15

Corporate Services

Corporate Services oversees the corporate governance requirements of UAC – the policies and procedures, external laws, regulations and community expectations that guide the company to achieve its vision, mission, values and strategic goals. It comprises two divisions; Finance and Administration and Human Resources.

Finance and Administration

UAC's Finance and Administration plans, prepares and implements UAC's Board-approved annual budget, regularly monitors expenditure against budget and reports UAC's financial position to the business.

It also undertakes accounting functions such as accounts receivable and accounts payable, GST and Fringe Benefit Tax accounting and reporting, insurance, credit card control, asset management, and the handling of UAC's records.

In 2014–15 the department developed an electronic document management system, ensuring best practice and increased efficiency in record-keeping.

UAC passed through its audit unmodified.

Human Resources

Human Resources key tasks include managing staff including recruitment, skills development and training.

In 2014–15 workplace wellbeing and safety programs included ergonomic assessment and training, injury management, workplace inspections, employee wellbeing initiatives such as flu vaccines and health assessments and, in 2014–15 for the first time, yoga and mini-massage sessions.

Tim Gleeson
Director, Corporate Services

Employee assistance included handling grievances, performance management, enterprise bargaining and advice to staff and managers on conditions of employment and legal obligations.

Throughout the year, HR developed and reviewed organisation-wide policies associated with HR and industrial relations and monitoring new/changes to legislation associated with any of the above responsibilities, ensuring compliance with the UAC Enterprise Agreement.

During 2014–15 UAC operated with 63 permanent employees across Client Services, Corporate Services, Information Services and Information Technology.

During peak application periods, UAC also recruited 48 fixed term temporary staff (primarily in client services) for periods of up to six months.

In keeping with its history of staff loyalty, 2014–15 saw long service recognition for many staff members including five who had achieved 10 years' service, five who had achieved 15 years and two who had achieved 20 years.

Client Services

Client Services is UAC's largest division, comprising the Operations, Assessment and Equity units.

Operations

The Operations Unit is responsible for a range of functions including maintaining course profiles through the collection of course-related information from UAC's institutions, distribution of ATAR notices, offer allocation and notification and compliance testing of key UAC systems. It also manages the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT), including candidate registration, co-ordination of test sessions and result notification.

Operations manages data in all three of UAC's environments: undergraduate, international and postgraduate.

Undergraduate

For the 2014–15 admission year, 94,168 undergraduate applications were received. This number includes Year 12 and non-Year 12 applicants.

This was a small decrease from the previous year (0.8 per cent), mainly attributed to non-Year 12 applications. The decrease in applications may have been due to uncertainty around fee deregulation indicated by the Australian Government and/or the trend in institutions increasing their direct application facilities.

Over the past five years, the number of offers has increased for both groups of applicants, with 101,653 made in 2014–15, an increase of 3,942 (4 per cent) compared with the previous year. There has been a greater increase in offers made to Year 12 applicants.

An increase in offers has been experienced since the Commonwealth Government removed the cap on funded enrolments, with a sharper increase since the introduction of year round admissions in 2013–14. This year institutions used the March, April and May rounds to make earlier offers to their semester 2 courses, as there were nearly 2,000 more offers made in this period compared with last year.

Postgraduate

In 2014–15, UAC received 12,335 applications for postgraduate study. This was a decrease of 15 per cent compared with last year. There were 13,717 offers made. Offers have also decreased, with 3,203 (19 per cent) fewer made compared with 2013–14.

The decrease may be due to institutions rationalising their postgraduate course offerings to ensure Australian Qualifications Framework compliance, and/or discontinued offerings. In addition, some institutions took their postgraduate admissions process in-house, leading to a decline in numbers through UAC.

International

UAC accepts applications from a particular group of international students – those who have completed an Australian Year 12, International Baccalaureate or New Zealand NCEA.

Applications from this group have been decreasing, which may be due to institutions increasing their direct application facility and/or (at the time) the high Australian dollar.

For the 2014–15 admission year, 2,469 applications were received, a decrease of 150 (5.7 per cent) compared with 2013–14. Offers continued to decrease, with 4,435 made in 2014–15, 411 (8.5 per cent) fewer compared with the previous year.

Ross Walsh
Operations Manager

Nerida Bewick
Assessment Manager

Assessment

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

UAC's had a permanent team of 10 highly experienced assessment officers and took on 27 fixed-term assessors during the peak application period from September to January.

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. International applicants are assessed using schedules developed through benchmarking each country's secondary and tertiary qualification standards against the entry requirements of UAC's institutions.

UAC also assesses specific eligibility criteria, for example whether an applicant meets course prerequisites or English language proficiency requirements.

To ensure UAC's assessments are fair and equitable for all applicants, Assessment staff need to stay abreast of educational reforms in Australia and around the world. In 2014–15 this included monitoring educational developments in the United Kingdom, Korea, Sweden, India, Nepal and Vietnam.

Other services

Special Tertiary Admissions Test

Many institutions accept the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) as an alternative way of qualifying for admission to tertiary study for certain categories of applicants – mostly non-Year 12 applicants or applicants over 21 years. STAT is a series of tests designed to assess a range of competencies considered important for success in tertiary study. There are two versions of the STAT test: Multiple Choice and Written English.

UAC manages STAT sittings across NSW and the ACT. It administers STAT enrolments and notifies candidates of their results.

In 2014–15, changes were made to the number of and scheduling of sessions held. These changes were made in response to a significant decline in candidate numbers on previous years.

There were 2,118 registrations in 2014 compared with 2,537 in 2013. A total of 1,800 candidates sat STAT, undertaking 2,325 tests – many candidates sit both STAT versions.

Qualifications Assessment Service

For applicants who wish to have their qualifications assessed before they apply, UAC offers a Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS). In 2014–15 UAC reviewed qualifications for 1,800 people who were then able to understand their eligibility for entry to tertiary study.

The user experience and functionality of the QAS web application was improved significantly in 2014–15 through a project with Information Technology and Information Services.

Equity

UAC's Equity unit centrally manages several schemes on behalf of its institution that assist certain applicants gain admission to tertiary study.

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 admissions 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-socioeconomic status schools and schools located in rural and regional Australia.

In the 2014–15 admissions period UAC received 20,499 EAS applications – 8,100 of these were received from students and 12,399 were automatically generated. This is an increase from the 19,329 applications received in 2013.

UAC has seen a significant 47 per cent increase in EAS applications since 2010 from 10,813 applications. Virtual applications grew most significantly. This was as a result of the expansion and automation of the School Environment category using as well as the introduction of a new disadvantage code.

For the 2014–15 admissions period, 20,298 (39.8 per cent) of the Year 12 undergraduate applicant pool received EAS consideration, the same percentage as in 2013–14.

While the majority of institutions consider EAS applications from applicants who have previously undertaken tertiary study, only 424 (1.2 per cent) of non-Year 12 undergraduate applicants submitted EAS applications 2014–15. This represents a slight increase on the previous year.

Equity Scholarships

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

Equity Scholarships through UAC comprise:

- Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships funded by the Australian Government.

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

For the 2014–15 admission year, UAC received 7,424 ES applications, a small increase of 83 (1.1 per cent) compared with the previous year.

Continuing the trend observed in previous years, UAC received a significant number of applications after Wednesday 7 January 2015, the change of preference closing date for Main Round offers – 2,406, of which 1,475 (61 per cent) were from students who were not applicants for admission via UAC but were students currently enrolled at a participating institution. It reflects, in particular, the first awareness of ES among Sole Parents and Carers who have recently enrolled and become aware of ES when arriving on campus and seeing promotional material or talking to admissions staff.

Generally ES offers maintain a relatively consistent ratio to the applicant pool, with approximately one in four (24 per cent) of ES applicants receiving an offer.

Institutions made 2,343 offer in 2014–15, only 26 fewer offers compared with the previous year.

Schools Recommendation Schemes

Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS) was a new scheme implemented in 2013–14 as a way for 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 recommendations, senior secondary studies, personal awards and achievements.

This was the first year that a centralised SRS scheme was implemented for participating institutions through UAC with nine institutions participating. Applications opened on 6 August 2014 and closed on 30 September 2014.

In this inaugural application period, UAC received 5,447 applications from 706 schools from every state in Australia.

Gordon Clutterham
Equity Manager

Information Services

Customer service

UAC's customer service team operate UAC's contact centre. This is the first point of call for anyone contacting UAC. The centre is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and handles telephone, counter and email enquiries. In UAC's peak period from August 2014 to February 2015, they handled 93,227 calls and 20,943 emails.

Community liaison

UAC's Community Liaison team travelled to meet thousands of students, careers advisers and parents throughout NSW and the ACT in 2014–15 at information sessions, careers expos and university events across the state.

They attended 31 expos throughout the Central West, Hunter, Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast, Central Coast, Southern Tablelands, Riverina, far South Coast, Canberra and Sydney metro areas, reaching more than 70,500 students.

The team also undertakes presentations to explain the admissions process to stakeholder groups. In 2014–15 these included seminars for prospective students at the University of Western Sydney and UNSW Australia and UAC Days for teaching professionals including principals, deputy principals, careers advisers and year coordinators on the intricacies of the ATAR and UAC's processes.

This professional engagement is supported by Schoolink, a portal on UAC's website that brings together resources for schools.

Publishing and communications

UAC produces publications to support all users of our services. These include potential undergraduate and postgraduate students.

UAC's flagship print publications in 2014–15, which include course information at UAC's participating institutions and application information, were:

- UAC 2014–15 Guide
- UAC 2014–15 International
- University Entry Requirements 2017 for Year 10 students
- All About UAC: For Year 11 and 12 students

Equity programs publications were:

- Educational Access Schemes (EAS) 2014–15
- Equity Scholarships 2014–15
- Schools Recommendations Schemes (SRS) 2014

Kim Paino
Director, Information Services

UAC also produces a series of free publications for students, parents, career advisers and non-Year 12 applicants. These publications are distributed by UAC's community engagement team. They are also available for download from UAC's website.

- All About UAC for Parents
- All About UAC for Careers Advisers
- Frequently Asked Questions About the ATAR

UAC's publishes the periodical publications: UAC News – a print newsletter sent to all high schools in NSW and the ACT for careers advisers, teachers, parents and students; and Directions – a regular e-newsletter is for applicants, careers advisers, institution staff and international students' agents. It advises subscribers of upcoming events and key dates.

Other publications include:

- Report on the Scaling of the 2014 NSW Higher School Certificate – a technical report compiled by the NSW Vice-Chancellors Technical Committee on Scaling.
- All about your ATAR – a booklet produced for Year 12 students on receipt of the ATAR.
- Steps 2 Study – a flyer outlining admission information for those who are not current school leavers.

Online

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

Between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015, UAC's website received 1,602,599 unique visitors. The total number of visits in UAC's peak period of January 2015 was 728,481. On 18 December 2014 when ATARs were released, there were 129,102 visits and on Main Round release date (21 January 2015) there were 103,817 visits in total.

Social media

UAC's Facebook page had more than 5,760 subscribers and Twitter had 344 followers at the end of 2014–15. Over 1,100 queries from applicants, parents and schools were received and answered. UAC's Facebook and Twitter services have become invaluable tools for connecting with applicants and offering speedy resolution of general queries.

UAC's instructional videos were updated on UAC's YouTube channel including guides for applicants on how to apply, instructions on changing course preferences and an overview of the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank. These videos received over 47,000 unique views.

For the first time, UAC launched a corporate video telling the story of three applicants who have recently made the transition from school to tertiary study through UAC. This video, Your Journey Starts Here, will be used to promote UAC's role in helping people with their journey towards tertiary education.

UAC ran several brand activation campaigns designed to both boost UAC's profile in the community as well as promote awareness of on-time closing deadlines. Building upon successes with radio advertising in recent years, UAC expanded its marketing strategy in 2014–15 to incorporate

multi-channel platforms such as online, social media and digital signage. This allowed UAC to better reach key audience segments with targeted messaging.

A number of ads featuring the students from Your Journey were run across three commercial radio networks during the year. The video was promoted on social media and condensed versions were featured on high-traffic news and lifestyle websites targeted at particular demographics across NSW and the ACT. These videos were delivered over 1.5 million times. Ads were also run on a number of large digital signs in high-traffic train stations in Sydney at Central, Town Hall and Bondi Junction.

Media

UAC issues regular media releases throughout the year with information on important dates, frequently asked questions, application and offer statistics. These media releases are sent to all major national media outlets and suburban, rural and local newspapers.

UAC also ran a radio campaign in the lead up to on-time applications closing. This campaign aims to encourage applicants to apply on time to meet course requirements and to avoid higher processing charges.
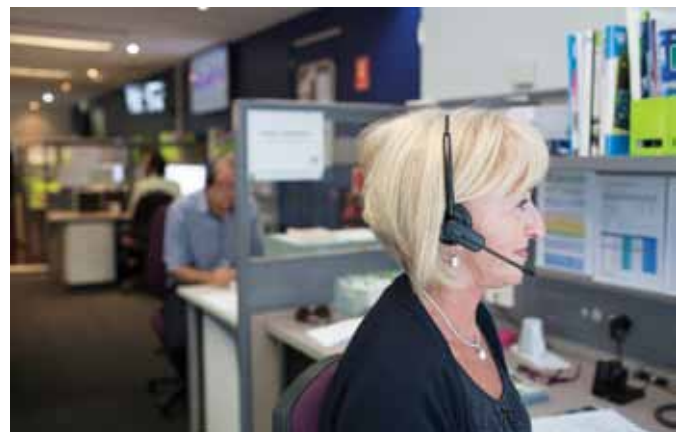
Information Technology

Information Technology provides a range of services to internal branches, external institutions and applicants including infrastructure and hosting, systems management, application development, data reporting and analytics.

In 2014–15 IT undertook the following key projects.

Disaster Recovery Plan and infrastructure upgrade

UAC successfully completed the planning and design of a Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) for implementation in 2015–16 and upgrade of core IT infrastructure at its offices at Sydney Olympic Park and the Macquarie Park data storage centre.

This will offer key benefits of:

- Risk reduction – In the event of a disaster, service restoration time is targeted at two hours.
- Cost reduction – The new virtual server environment has a reduced physical and environmental footprint, resulting in a reduction of operational overheads. It also requires less call upon third-party software and reduced maintenance and support costs.
- Increased efficiency – A virtual server environment will result in significant time reduction in the provision of new servers and services.
- Increased capacity – The new high-capacity link into our service provider AARNet and system is designed for flexibility for growth of services.
- Scalability – The flexible environment enables expansion in line with service growth.

Security upgrades

To meet the requirements of the Australian Privacy Principles, core UAC systems, including the SAS data warehouse, underwent changes to security controls. These changes restricted access to applicant contact details to only those institutions where a preference had been made. All UAC systems are also being upgraded to ensure encrypted SSL links.

New phone system

UAC's legacy NEC PABX phone system was successfully replaced by a CISCO IP solution with no hardware, network or data center infrastructure issues.

Software development – Qualification Assessment Service

The software development team, using the latest Grails web application framework, completed the redevelopment of the Qualification Assessment Service (QAS) application.

Dudley Collinson
Director, Information Technology

Major improvements included:

- Information Services was able to assume total control of the static and dynamic text of the QAS application, meaning communication changes can be effected in a timely and efficient manner
- The application was now mobile-enabled with an intuitive and more user-friendly design.
- Increased application security.

Main admissions period

The months of December and January are the busiest time of year for IT operational tasks and support (including evening and weekend coverage), where a number of systems reach peak load in accommodating large volumes of public access.

Key dates included:

- ATAR release – 19 December 2014 – between 8.30am and 10.30am the system handled 39,544 unique student ATAR retrievals and 10,746 subsequent changes of preference.
- Changes of preference for Main Round closing – 6 and 7 January 2015 – 16,464 preference changes made by applications.
- Main Round offers released – 21 January 2015 – between 5.30pm and 7.00pm, 56,421 applicants logged on to retrieve their offers.

Research, Statistics and Development

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

In 2014–15, RSD was involved in the following projects and activities:

- development of an indicator for the overall academic achievement of applicants for the Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS), based on their Year 11 results. This indicator is used by some institutions in their assessment of SRS applicants.
- ongoing development of methods to compare applicant qualifications for equitable assessment
- analysis of the various indicators of English language proficiency, to recommend to institutions in regards to equivalence standards.

- establishment of a standard procedure in dealing with external data requests received by UAC and guidelines for data users to safeguard data confidentiality.
- liaison with tertiary admission centres around Australia in reviewing the calculation of the ATAR in order to achieve greater methodological consistency across different jurisdictions
- ad hoc statistical analyses on both UAC's applicants and participating institutions, as well as analyses on 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.
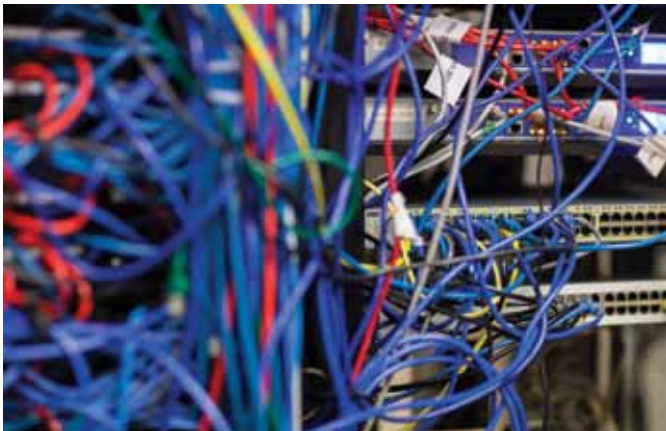
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For those travelling by train, UAC is 250 metres
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www.uac.edu.au/general/contact.shtml

www.facebook.com/universitiesadmissionscentre

http://twitter.com/UACinfo

www.youtube.com/user/UACinfo

About this publication

The UAC Annual Report 2014–15 gives an overview of
the operations of the Universities Admissions Centre
(UAC) for the 2014–15 admissions year and includes
highlights of that year.