

Annual Report

2019–20



UAC





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Foreword from the Chair



On behalf of the Board of Directors I have pleasure in presenting UAC's report on the 2019–20 financial year.

The Board thanks retiring Chair Professor Andrew Parfitt (Provost and Senior Vice-President, University of Technology Sydney) for his many years of service. Andrew joined the UAC Board in August 2014 and was appointed Chair in July 2016. As UAC has rapidly diversified its business operations and strengthened its voice in the higher education sector, Andrew has provided sound, stable and supportive leadership to the UAC executive.

It has been a pleasure to act as interim Chair since Andrew's retirement in December 2019 and I warmly welcome Professor Denise Kirkpatrick to the role from July 2020.

Joining Denise on the Board in July 2020 is Cathy Kovacs who replaces Claire Hopkins. I thank Claire for her valuable contribution over the past four years.

It goes without saying that UAC has not been immune to the extraordinary events of 2020. As higher education providers rally to recover from the pandemic shockwaves, UAC has adjusted its strategic outlook.

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, UAC was gearing up for another successful year and vigorously pursuing a range of exciting strategic initiatives: Reach, Datalytics, Advance and verifiable credentials. Amid the increased financial uncertainty caused by the pandemic, UAC adjusted course to concentrate on projects carrying less risk.

A refreshed UAC Strategic Plan 2019–2021 was released to reflect this new direction. The plan builds on the growth of UAC's bespoke admissions services, consolidating it as part of core business and maintaining focus on meeting the needs of institutions.

As always, this year the Board was aided by the significant work of its subcommittees: the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, the Audit Committee, and the Business Development Committee. Regular updates were provided to the shareholder, Uniprojects P/L, and to the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the NSW Deputy Vice-Chancellors' (Academic) Committee.

Despite the challenges of this year, UAC continues to display the values incorporated in the strategic plan – Collaboration, Fairness, Innovation, Integrity and Passion – and can look forward to unparalleled opportunities for success in the future.

Mr Damien Israel

Interim Chair, UAC Board (December 2019 to June 2020)
Chief Operating Officer, University of Wollongong

Managing Director's report



The 2019–20 financial year has tested the resilience of the Australian higher education sector in many ways. In response to the particular challenges of the year, UAC further committed to working with its participating institutions, interstate counterparts and government partners to ensure prospective domestic and international students continue to have access to our world-class tertiary programs.

It has been heartening to see a significant increase in application numbers across UAC's various admissions channels. It is hoped that this bodes well for the future of our higher education providers.

I thank retiring UAC Board Chair, Professor Andrew Parfitt, for the support he has given UAC – and me, personally – during his years of service to our organisation. I look forward to working with our new Chair, Professor Denise Kirkpatrick.

This year, UAC has continued its collaborative work with institutions, sector partners and government to improve the quality and efficiency of admissions-related services.

To support the Commonwealth Government's Higher Education Relief Package (an initiative to support workers displaced by the impact of COVID-19 to upskill or retrain), UAC augmented the national Course Seeker website to accommodate listings of subsidised short courses. Working with our interstate admissions organisation counterparts, UAC has taken a lead role in the design and coordination of the Course Seeker platform since its inception in 2018.

Our collaboration with the Commonwealth Government continued with the ongoing development of a national credentials platform, which will allow individuals to control their credentials in a single digital interface. UAC is working with Higher Ed Services and

the Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment to deliver this game-changing platform by December 2021.

Another of our major technical innovations, UAC Advance, has moved from prototype into full development. Advance offers institutions a complete credit management solution, from a credit calculator for applicants to automated precedents and articulations and full integration with core admissions systems.

UAC's service-matching initiative, UAC Reach, continues to enable institutions to achieve strong student engagement through targeted marketing campaigns. Highly successful campaigns have delivered exceptional results and we anticipate further growth in Reach revenue in the coming year.

A range of measures and actions for business continuity has been implemented to reduce both disruption to UAC business during the coronavirus crisis and the recovery time after its impact. Work-from-home arrangements have been in place across the organisation since March 2020 and the willingness of staff to adapt quickly to these new conditions is commendable.

Thanks to the calm and confident approach of the UAC Board, management and staff, we have made great strides during 2019 and 2020 and, with determination, collaboration and creativity, we have every reason to remain optimistic about our future.

Dr David Christie
Managing Director, UAC



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 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
- 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

- the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, which assists the UAC Board in discharging its responsibilities in relation to the selection, appointment and remuneration practices and performance evaluation of the Managing Director, UAC Board and Board committees
- the Business Development Committee, which assists the UAC Board in discharging its governance and fiduciary responsibilities in relation to the pursuit of business opportunities within the higher education sector.

UAC's external auditor is the Auditor-General of NSW. The Auditor-General provides an independent opinion on whether UAC's financial statements are true and fair and comply with applicable Australian Accounting Standards.

UAC Board 2019–20

Chair

Professor Andrew Parfitt

Provost and Senior Vice-President

University of Technology Sydney

Appointed August 2014

(Appointed Chair July 2016/Resigned December 2019)

Professor Parfitt has had extensive experience across the higher education sector. Prior to his current position at 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's Telecommunications and Industrial Physics Division.

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

Professor Parfitt 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, he was a ministerial appointment to the Commonwealth Government's Space Industry Innovation Council.

Professor Parfitt 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 in the area of Initial Teacher Education.

Other members

Prof Grady Venville

Deputy Chair

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Australian National University

Appointed January 2019

Mr Damien Israel

Chief Finance Officer

University of Wollongong

Appointed July 2011

Interim Chair, December 2019 to June 2020

Mr Scott Nichols

Director, Management Consulting

KPMG Australia

Appointed September 2014

Professor Tyrone Carlin

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Southern Cross University

Appointed January 2017

Ms Nicole Grainger-Marsh

Chief Customer and Operating Officer

MTC Australia

Appointed January 2016

Ms Claire Hopkins

General Manager, Accredited Portfolio

RMIT Online

Appointed January 2016

Resigned May 2020

Mr Robert Chard

General Manager, Corporate and Enterprise

Konica Minolta

Appointed January 2017

Dr David Christie

Managing Director, UAC

Appointed March 2015

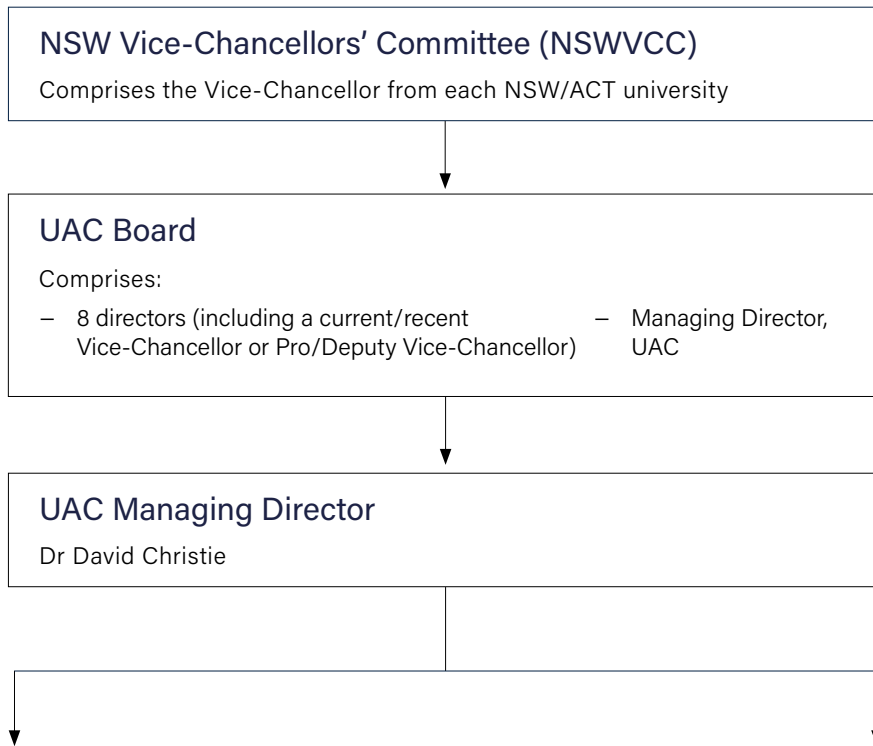
Officer

Mr Michael Berg

Company Secretary

Appointed January 2018

Organisational structure



UAC management

- General Manager, Business Analytics**
 - Data analysis
 - Business insights
 - Research, statistics and development
- General Manager, People and Finance**
 - Human resources
 - Payroll
 - Finance
 - Administration
- General Manager, Marketing and Engagement**
 - Customer service
 - Marketing and communications
 - Community engagement
 - Media liaison
- Chief Information Officer**
 - Systems management
 - Software
 - Digital products
 - Product development
 - Project management
- General Manager, Operations**
 - Centralised services
 - UAC Connect
 - Course profiles
- General Manager, Business Solutions**
 - New business
 - Business development

Users Committee

- Chair**
- Provides advice to the Managing Director.
- Comprises one representative from each participating institution.



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 2019–20

Participating

In the 2019–20 admissions period, UAC worked with 27 participating institutions, which together offered more than 2,200 courses.

UAC’s participating institutions were:

- Australian Catholic University
- Australian College of Applied Psychology
- Australian Maritime College
- Australian National University
- Charles Sturt University
- CQUniversity
- Griffith University
- International College of Management, Sydney
- 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
- University of Canberra

- University of New England
- University of Newcastle
- University of Sydney
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Wollongong
- UNSW Sydney
- UNSW Canberra at ADFA
- Western Sydney University.

Apply direct

UAC publishes general information and course listings for other approved higher education providers. This information appears in the UAC Guide 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 2019–20 admissions period, UAC worked with 12 apply direct institutions. These were:

- Academy of Information Technology
- Academy of Music and Performing Arts
- Alphacrucis College
- Australian Film Television and Radio School
- Australian Institute of Music
- Endeavour College of Natural Health
- JMC Academy
- Legal Profession Admission Board
- National Institute of Dramatic Art
- The University of Notre Dame Australia
- University of Tasmania – Sydney
- Wentworth Institute of Higher Education.

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. UAC’s management structure and relationships are set out on page 06.



Corporate objectives

Strategic plan 2019–2021

The UAC Strategic Plan 2019–2021 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 admissions processes 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. It has also been better for prospective students, especially Year 12s, providing them with an easy access point to thousands of course options.

In the last decade there has been a decline in the centralised admissions service as universities have taken more direct admissions. In that time UAC has evolved its bespoke solutions business to meet the needs of institutions and it now represents a third of our applications processed.

The UAC Strategic Plan 2019–2021 seeks to build on that success to take UAC to the next stage of growth, provide new services, consolidate our core and continue to work with institutions to meet their needs.

Our mission

To be at the forefront of access to higher education.

Our vision

To be the pre-eminent provider of admission-related services to education institutions and their prospective students.

Our values

- Collaboration
- Fairness
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Passion

Our goals

1. Help school leavers access higher education.
2. Provide bespoke services for institutions.
3. Innovate to add value and efficiency.
4. Position UAC as the leader in admissions.
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

UAC manages the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), including website release, 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 help 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 help financially disadvantaged students with the costs associated with tertiary study. UAC administers Equity Scholarships 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 and senior secondary studies.

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 the same age cohort.

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 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 the 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 17 December 2019 to 55,031 students. Following this, UAC provided support to thousands of students via the ATAR Enquiry Centre, the customer contact centre and social media. The Marketing and Engagement team also responded to enquiries from all major media outlets.

The median ATAR for 2019 was 69.75, slightly higher than in 2018. The median ATAR for females was 71.10 and the median ATAR for males was 68.05. More than 49% 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/scalingreports.



Initiatives and developments

Course Seeker

The Course Seeker website continued to provide a platform for UAC, government and other tertiary admissions centres to collaborate on the provision of information to prospective tertiary students.

This year, a collection of discounted short courses was published on Course Seeker to support the Commonwealth Government's COVID-19 Higher Education Relief Package. Institutions were encouraged to run the courses to help workers displaced by the impact of COVID-19 upskill or retrain.

Data analysis

In addition to supporting UAC's data function, the Business Analytics team produces reports to contribute to the knowledge base of the higher education sector. In 2019–20 it published the following:

- Data Analysis: The Impact of Senior Secondary Subject Choices on Success at University (commissioned by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment)
- Socio-Economic Status and the ATAR
- The Usefulness of the ATAR as a Measure of Academic Achievement and Potential.

UAC Advance

UAC's credit management solution moved into the full development phase this year. UAC Advance includes the following components: credit calculator, application portal, automated precedents and articulations, full reporting and analytics, and integration with institutions' core systems. Negotiations with prospective clients continued.

UAC Connect

UAC Connect gained two new clients:

- **Australian Catholic University**, for the processing of applications to the ACU Guarantee early entry program
- **University of Newcastle**, for the processing of applications to the suite of University of Newcastle scholarships.

UAC Reach

UAC Reach achieved exceptional results for both UAC and its clients. Highly successful marketing campaigns run on behalf of institution clients have delivered strong student engagement and increased demand for this evolving service. We anticipate further growth in Reach revenue in the coming year.

Department highlights

People and Finance



Tim Gleeson

General Manager

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

Finance

The Finance unit has a diverse range of responsibilities. We provide 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, insurance and legal matters, and policy development for the organisation.

The unit provides key information to the UAC Board and its sub-committees.

During the year we implemented paperless accounts receivable and payable, enabling greater control and efficiency. As a result of these streamlined procedures, invoices are processed more quickly and easily while still maintaining an appropriate audit trail.

Management reporting is always a key focus for the team. We continually strive to improve the presentation and understanding of data across the organisation. This allows key decision-makers to gain valuable insights around business metrics and performance, to align effort with corporate strategic aims, and to identify opportunities for growth.

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 2019–20 UAC staff numbers rose by 18% to 95 permanent employees and 69 fixed-term temporary and casual staff. This increase is a result of UAC's strategic goal to develop innovative business solutions for the ever-changing higher education sector.

Like many businesses experiencing significant growth and change, COVID-19 brought a range of threats and opportunities to UAC, and to the higher education sector as a whole. For UAC, the way we did business had to shift. Office-based tasks were quickly reviewed and adapted for a work-from-home environment. With the guidance of the Human Resources team and the technical capabilities of our IT team, UAC staff were able to maintain all business operations.

Just prior to the COVID-19 impact, UAC's Employee Engagement Survey revealed that the company's engagement score was 75.04%. Our top engagement factors remained work/life balance, flexibility and empowerment, and teamwork. All of these factors came into play as employees transitioned to remote workplaces. While communication across the company and the sharing of knowledge and information between departments are areas that we will strengthen over the next few years, we have been fortunate to retain our high quality staff and grow our business despite the restrictions caused by COVID-19.

Recruitment activities remained a priority throughout the year with many significant projects requiring additional resources, especially in the IT and Business Solutions departments. While COVID-19 prompted a temporary freeze on recruitment activities, this was lifted shortly after the 2020–21 budget was approved and the emerging business effects were assessed.

Enterprise bargaining for a new enterprise agreement commenced in early 2020. However, with the uncertainty caused by COVID-19, the Enterprise Bargaining Committee agreed to suspend negotiations and reconvene in March 2021, when the environment is anticipated to be somewhat more stable.

Performance and development planning discussions continued across the company with a focus on change management and stakeholder engagement. Company-wide workshops were conducted around these topics and presented by external facilitators.

In the challenging environment that we found ourselves in during the year, People and Culture initiatives were critical in maintaining the engagement of our workforce. Social interactions, health and wellbeing initiatives and the reaffirming of UAC's Purpose and Values continue to be important priorities in leading our work efforts, sustaining our culture and connecting our people across the organisation and beyond.



Business Solutions



James Kevin

General Manager

Through the expansion of existing business lines and the introduction of new strategic initiatives, the Business Solutions division advanced the significant growth of UAC's revenue, market share and product suite.

UAC Connect

Despite the maturity of UAC Connect (our white-label online portal), the product enjoyed another year of outstanding growth, with application volumes (87,000) virtually on par with the traditional Centralised environment. This included applications for inbound international students via Agent Access, which also exceeded targets in its first year of operation.

This growth, across both domestic and international cohorts, was delivered despite the second half of the financial year being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The client list for UAC Connect also continued to grow, with the majority of member institutions now investing in this product. In 2019–20, we welcomed two new clients:

- the Australian Catholic University, which is processing admissions to its Guarantee program (early entry scheme) for campuses across three states (NSW, Qld and Vic). In the first year of using Connect, application volumes increased 75% year-on-year.

- the University of Newcastle, which employed Connect to streamline its Scholarships program. Connect allowed students to make one application for the suite of UON scholarships, replacing the previously laborious process of having to apply for individual scholarships.

Centralised admission

UAC's Centralised offering was also enhanced, following an agreement with the University of Sydney to introduce bespoke features for its Gadigal program (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students). The project improved identification of prospective students and streamlined the application process. The features were subsequently made available to all Centralised participating institutions.

Other bespoke features, such as additional offer rounds for international students based on Year 11 results, were also added to the platform to help institutions respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategic initiatives

Sales of the Reach program surpassed expectations in its first year of operation. Clients – both members and private institutions – purchased advertising campaigns on the UAC website, along with targeted EDM and SMS campaigns to UAC applicants.

A national marketing campaign and roadshow was conducted to promote UAC's credit management solution, Advance. It generated significant interest, particularly from interstate institutions. Negotiations with several universities to join the pilot program were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic but are likely to be renewed in 2021.

Operations



Nerida Bewick
General Manager

Operations is UAC's largest division, comprising the Course Profiles, Assessment (Centralised and Connect) and Access 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 and Educational Access Schemes. Operations manages data for all three of UAC's Centralised environments – undergraduate, international and postgraduate – as well as for all Connect clients.

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 usually 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 Higher School Certificate and ATAR.

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, staff stay abreast of educational reforms in Australia and around the world.

Centralised services

The 2019–20 undergraduate and international admissions year opened on 3 April 2019 and closed on 7 February 2020. Figures reported in the following undergraduate, international, postgraduate and Access sections relate to this admissions period, not the financial year.

Undergraduate

In 2019–20, UAC received 79,568 applications for undergraduate admission. Compared to the same period in the previous admissions year, there was an increase of 4,192 applications (5.56%).

The increase in applications resulted in an increase in offers, with over 3,400 more offers made compared to the previous year.

International

UAC received 3,254 applications from international students (those who completed an Australian Year 12, International Baccalaureate or New Zealand NCEA), an increase of 2.59% from the previous year.

A total of 5,467 offers were generated.

Postgraduate

The 2019–20 postgraduate admissions year opened on 4 September 2019 and closed on 21 August 2020. During this period, UAC received 5,725 applications for postgraduate admission and made 6,912 offers. Although this was only 51 applications more than the previous year, there were 18% more offers.

Access

On behalf of participating institutions, UAC's Access unit manages programs addressing access to, and participation in, tertiary study for disadvantaged students. The Commonwealth Scholarships Program, in particular, supports eligible Indigenous students with the general costs of study and/or accommodation.

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 or choosing.

UAC processes EAS applications for undergraduate applicants through UAC.

In 2019–20, UAC received 26,021 EAS applications, almost 6,000 more than the previous year. Of these applications, 13,612 were submitted by students and 12,409 were automatically generated using geocoding. Geocoding identifies applicants whose residential address is classified by SEIFA data as being in the bottom socio-economic quartile.

Equity Scholarships

Equity Scholarships help financially disadvantaged undergraduate and postgraduate students with the costs associated with higher education.

Equity Scholarships processed by UAC on behalf of our participating institutions comprise:

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

UAC processes Equity Scholarships for:

- applicants applying via UAC
- applicants applying via QTAC, VTAC and directly to the institution
- currently enrolled students.

During 2019–20, UAC received 9,168 Equity Scholarships applications, a slight increase from the previous year.

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) the ATAR. These include the applicant's Year 11 studies and the school's ratings of their studies and personal aptitudes.

For 2019–20 admissions, SRS applications opened on 3 April 2019 and closed at midnight on 30 September 2019.

A total of 16,428 SRS applications were received; an increase of 15% from the previous year.

Of all SRS applicants, 15,450 were from NSW, 607 from the ACT, 139 from International Baccalaureate schools, and 222 from all other states.

UAC Connect

During the Connect 2019–20 admissions year (March 2019 to February 2020), the Connect team processed just under 66,000 applications for the following institutions:

- Australian National University
 - Admissions, Scholarships and Accommodation Scheme
 - International Scheme for Student Planning and Selection Framework
- CQUniversity
- Charles Sturt University
- Macquarie University
- University of New England
- University of Wollongong
- Western Sydney University.

The services provided included assessment of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and early admission schemes.

Other services

Qualifications Assessment Service

UAC offers a Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS) for applicants who need to have their qualifications assessed external to UAC's application processes. In 2019–20, UAC provided 1,704 Qualification Assessment Statements to QAS applicants, of which a significant proportion were applying to the University of Sydney's Graduate Medicine and Dentistry courses.

Participating institutions



Apply direct institutions



Undergraduate

April 2019 to February 2020

Courses offered



Domestic applications



Domestic offers



International applications



International offers



Postgraduate

April 2019 to February 2020

Courses offered



Domestic applications



Domestic offers



Equity

April 2019 to February 2020

Equity Scholarships applications



Educational Access Schemes applications



Equity Scholarships offered



Schools Recommendation Schemes applications



Qualifications Assessment Service

People assessed



UAC Connect applications

March 2019 to February 2020



Marketing and Engagement



Kim Paino

General Manager

Campaigns

In September 2019, UAC launched 'Access your potential', a campaign designed to inspire and engage Year 12 students as they prepare to start university. Based on a key piece of video content, the campaign was delivered around the early bird application closing period.

A 30-second television commercial aired on networks across northern NSW, the far South Coast and Canberra, with targeting around sports games, news, and lifestyle programs. The commercial was also aired on catch-up TV across Channels 7, 9 and 10. Bumper ads ran on YouTube with affinity targeting and a focus on reach and frequency.

Digital rail advertising featuring 8-second cut-downs were delivered across consecutive portrait screens, large format displays and WOW walls at key commuter hubs across Sydney.

Communications

Email updates and reminders

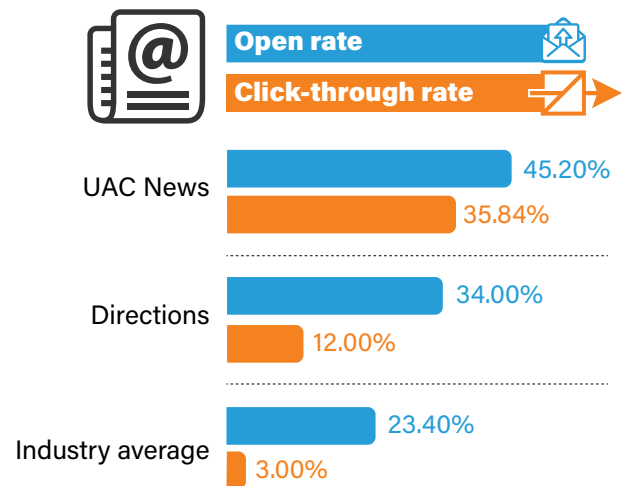
The Marketing team emailed NSW Year 12 students throughout the year to keep them informed of important deadlines and to reassure them that, despite the impact of COVID-19, no student would be disadvantaged in relation to university entry. Parents and guardians of Year 12 students who requested updates were also sent regular emails, and careers advisers were notified of new UAC resources.

Newsletters

UAC publishes two periodical newsletters to advise subscribers of important information about admissions, upcoming events, key dates and scholarship information:

- *UAC News* is a quarterly e-newsletter for principals, teachers and careers advisers and includes news from UAC's participating institutions. Sent to a list of more than 2,200 recipients, it has an average open rate of 45.2% and a click-through rate of 35.84%. Both these rates are well above industry averages.
- *Directions* is a regular e-newsletter for all current applicants, prospective students, careers advisers, institution staff and international student agents. Sent to more than 6,400 recipients six times during the 2019–20 admissions period, it has an average open rate of 34% and a click-through rate of over 12%.

To enhance our communication channels with our partner institutions, UAC relaunched *Update from UAC* in 2020. This newsletter updates institution staff on system changes, project progress and new initiatives.



Submissions to public sector reviews

UAC regularly makes submissions to public sector reviews related to our mission of promoting equity of access to tertiary education.

In December 2019 we took the opportunity to respond to the NSW Curriculum Review Interim Report, *Nurturing Wonder and Igniting Passion: Designs for a Future School Curriculum*, and the Discussion Paper on the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training. Both submissions are available to the public on the UAC website.

Community Engagement

Despite the significant impact of COVID-19 restrictions on our usual in-person contact with our target audiences, Community Engagement quickly embraced online platforms to maintain engagement with potential applicants, parents, careers advisers, teachers and universities. In fact, we attended over 320 events, which was only 10 fewer than the previous year.

Community Engagement produced 19 YouTube videos for schools to access on-demand. We also introduced a fortnightly email to careers advisers to act as a guide throughout the admissions period.

The team attended several interstate careers adviser network meetings to meet the demands of interstate schools and their students. Invitations to these meetings were a result of active relationship-building over previous years.

With over 3,000 email enquiries, 1,000 Instagram direct messages and thousands of phone calls answered, Community Engagement has been a hub of activity in 2019–20.

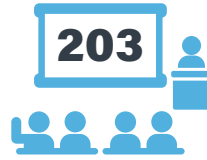
Customer Service

UAC's Customer Service team operates our contact centre. The centre is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and handles telephone, counter, email, LiveChat and Facebook enquiries. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, counter service was suspended from 27 March 2020. It will re-open when UAC can ensure the safety of all staff and visitors.

In UAC's peak period from August 2019 to February 2020, the centre handled 35,369 phone calls, 13,677 emails, 561 LiveChat interactions and 559 Facebook direct messages.

On ATAR release day, the centre received 743 phone enquiries, 116 emails, and enquiries from face-to-face visitors. This is in addition to the 1,201 calls received by the ATAR Enquiry Centre and 493 to the UAC PIN hotline.

Other days on which we answered a high volume of enquiries were: 30 September (early bird closing) – 897 calls and 183 emails; December Round 2 offer day – 673 calls and 224 emails; January Round 1 offer day – 588 calls and 97 emails.



Student and parent information sessions

Careers adviser and teacher sessions



Virtual expos

University engagements



Phone enquiries
51,408

Email enquiries
21,390



1,179 LiveChat interactions

Facebook interactions

995



Media

A media report curating the day's news stories in the higher education and school sector is sent to UAC staff every weekday morning.

As part of its media engagement, UAC sends regular media releases to a targeted group of media contacts, peaking around the key admissions period of December when the ATAR is released and university offers of admission are sent.

Highlights included a media release announcing the launch of Subject Compass in May 2019, which led to media coverage by the *Daily Telegraph* that was syndicated Australia-wide and reached more than 8.8 million people. It was also discussed on The Edge 96.ONE morning show.

In October 2019, UAC released a series of reports about the efficacy of the ATAR as a predictor of university success. These received extensive coverage nationally, including in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and its associated interstate mastheads, *The Newcastle Herald* and 75 regional publications, reaching more than 14 million readers.

They also generated much community discussion on radio, such as 2GB, ABC regional, Triple J, i98FM Illawarra, and ABC Radio National's Life Matters program. They were also covered on SBS World News.

The media team also works closely with the Data Analytics team to publish statistics and commentary at significant points in the application cycle, such as the breakdown of semester 1 applicant and offer numbers.

Social media



In 2019–20, the Marketing team used social media to engage with, and provide advice and support to, prospective students throughout their higher education journey, especially as they navigated unexpected interruptions due to the pandemic.

The team focused on hosting numerous Facebook and Instagram Live events to enable us to respond instantly to viewer questions and concerns. Topics included the ATAR, scaling, offers, pathways, equity schemes, and changes resulting from the pandemic. Over 2,500 prospective students, parents, careers advisers and teachers participated in these live events and the recordings reached close to another 100,000 people.

UAC's social media audience increased rapidly over the year, with close to 10,000 new followers joining us on Facebook and 1,200 on Instagram. Our combined daily posts received 4 million impressions.

We now have more than 21,000 Facebook followers and our posts reached a total of 2.9 million people, 2.4 million more than last year.

On Instagram we have a niche but extremely engaged audience of close to 4,000 Year 12 students who look to UAC as a credible source of information. Our posts reached 319,696 people, the majority being Year 12 students aged between 17 and 18.

		
Followers	21,000	4,000
Total reach	2.9 million	319,696

Website

UAC's website is the main information source and application facility for undergraduate, postgraduate and international courses at UAC's participating institutions. With over 1.4 million unique visitors each year, it provides the organisation with extensive exposure across the country and internationally.

Efforts to enhance the UAC website continued during 2019–20. Key improvements included:

- significant advances towards achieving Level AA accessibility
- refinement of course search sort and filter
- introduction of user feedback option on high-traffic pages
- addition of homepage quick links.

Focus group sessions conducted with Year 12 applicants and careers advisers provided invaluable feedback on the UAC website user experience. The Marketing team continues to develop and fine-tune content to provide users with accurate and accessible information on higher education options.

Total website sessions:

3,055,013



Total page views:

6,128,696



Unique users:

1,463,455





Information Technology



Dudley Collinson

Chief Information Officer

UAC's Information Technology department provides a range of technology-related services to UAC internal departments and the sector, including universities, private institutions, applicants, and state and federal government. These services include systems, applications, tools, core infrastructure, cloud services, project management and systems development.

In 2019–20, IT undertook the following key initiatives:

Support for new business lines

IT continued with projects in support of the following new business lines:

- UAC Advance (credit management)
- UAC Reach (advertising campaigns)
- UAC Insights (business intelligence).

In addition, projects commenced in support of two new business lines:

- UAC Credentials
- UAC International Agent Portal.

UAC Connect development

Projects were undertaken for the UAC Connect business line. These included:

- further work on continuous ('rolling') admissions
- ongoing improvements to the management of system-generated correspondence
- further development of a comprehensive admissions, scholarship and accommodation application integrated with university systems

- development of two new portals for institution-specific early admissions schemes, one of which included an interview booking facility
- enhancements to an existing early admissions portal
- an institution-specific portal for application and allocation of scholarships.

Centralised admissions enhancements

An institution-specific interface for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants was completed.

Student assistance

Two UAC student assistance facilities were updated:

- Subject Compass – a website service tool to help Year 10 students choose their HSC subjects based on their interests and possible tertiary course choices – was updated in response to student experiences.
- Additional features were added to the Course Seeker website: inclusion of courses from private providers; inclusion of short courses subsidised by the Commonwealth Government in response to COVID-19; various enhancements requested by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

Support for ongoing operations

IT continued to provide support for the business, including:

- adjusting the ATAR program to accommodate changes made to the NSW curriculum, and developing additional reports requested by the Technical Committee on Scaling
- maintaining IT systems and infrastructure
- facilitating opening and closing of applications, offer rounds, ATAR calculation and ATAR release.

IT infrastructure

A project was initiated to improve the security of UAC's IT environment and gain accreditation for ISO/IEC 27001:2013 Information technology – Security techniques – Information security management systems – Requirements.

Business continuity and disaster recovery

An extended IT disaster recovery failover test was successfully completed, with the business running from the disaster recovery site for one week without impact to services.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all UAC staff began to work from home in late March 2020. The success of this transition was due to comprehensive business continuity planning, including:

- enhanced VPN capabilities
- the rolling out of MS Teams to all staff
- procurement of a small number of additional laptops and monitors.

Main admissions period

The months of December and January are the busiest times of the year for core IT systems. Several systems reach peak load in accommodating large volumes of public access.

Key dates and volumes included:

- ATARs released on 17 December 2019 – between 1.00pm and 11.59pm 49,200 students retrieved their ATAR via the web and 18,666 via the mobile application, and there were 7,662 subsequent changes to course preferences
- December Round 2 offers released on 23 December 2019 – 35,520 applicants logged on to retrieve their offers and full offer details were emailed to each applicant
- January Round 1 offers released on 10 January 2020 – 18,200 applicants logged on to retrieve their offers and full offer details were emailed to each applicant.



Business Analytics



Anthony Manny

General Manager

The Business Analytics unit experienced some major changes this year. A data analyst was recruited, the Research and Data Science team (which carries out the ATAR calculation process) came under its umbrella, and several of UAC's data functions were consolidated within the team. This consolidation has allowed better coordination of the external-facing data services provided by UAC.

Major achievements this year also included the following:

- The Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment commissioned UAC to examine the relationship between HSC subject selection and university success. With our analytical expertise and extensive access to data, we are ideally positioned to complete this analysis. The report, entitled *Data Analysis: The Impact of Senior Secondary Subject Choices on Success at University*, was well received and highly commended.
- Dashboard production commenced with the commissioning of the UAC Insights website. Our institutions now have access to a greater range of data and deeper insights. The UAC Insights website has also facilitated development of internal UAC dashboards.
- Bespoke business analysis using our ever-expanding data continued to be a popular request from institutions. Where appropriate, bespoke analysis was delivered using the UAC Insights dashboard.



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

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This publication is available on UAC's website at uac.edu.au/about.

About this publication

The *UAC Annual Report 2019-20* gives an overview of the operations of the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) during 2019-20 and includes department highlights.

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UAC


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