

Equality Impact Assessment on Student Admissions

Response by the Undergraduate Admissions Committee (UAC)

The UAC is pleased that the report recognises the range of work that the University and Colleges conduct in order to reach out to under-represented groups, and that it praises the fairness and consistency of its admissions policy. It does note however that not all of the data seem to have been tested for completeness or for statistical relevance, and that there is not a full understanding of the potentially adverse impact of some of the recommendations made. As noted the University has now established its own Equality and Diversity Committee and section which will support work to keep these matters under review.

In connection with the report's recommendations (as at Section 8.0), the UAC's preliminary comment is as follows:

Recommendation A. Communications

"[Admissions] websites could be more user friendly for people with disabilities, and there could be clearer signage that the information is available through other means, for example in Braille and on tape."

The UAC notes the comments recorded in the report and will ask the UAC Publications Sub-Group to consider the way in which provision is communicated to prospective students.

Recommendation B. Monitoring Data

"...that the Admissions Offices for both Graduate and Undergraduate students pilot some analysis with Departments focusing on the different diversity strands, in particular ethnicity, gender and disability."

The Cambridge Admissions Office will discuss with the Equality and Diversity team regarding ways in which it might be appropriate within resources available to report Department, Faculty and School Undergraduate admissions data by diversity strand. The UAC notes that reporting by the sexual orientation and religion/belief strands is not presently a legal requirement, nor is it possible as those data are not collected by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).



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Recommendation C. Ethnicity

“...that the University investigates further why students from [Black and non-Chinese Asian ethnic] backgrounds are less likely to apply to Cambridge and for those that do apply, why the success rate for acceptance is less than White and Chinese students.”

The UAC and the Equality and Diversity team will support University efforts to explore the issues relating to success rates for students from specific ethnic groups. The UAC does not consider, however, that the numbers involved are statistically significant, and suggests that the report does not take account of a range of highly relevant contextual factors.

Recommendation D. Disability

“...Admissions Offices and the Disability Resource Centre should collaborate further to encourage students to declare a disability if they have one.”

The UAC notes that the Admissions Forum continues to work with the Disability Resource Centre to encourage students with a disability to make an appropriate declaration during the application process.

Recommendation E. Widening Participation

“...that the University carries out an analysis of how many students have been selected as result of the widening participation programme...”

As reported in the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment submitted to HEFCE in Summer 2009, the University engages well over 100,000 individuals per year in an array of outreach activities ranging from individual day visits to week long residential Summer Schools. The UAC acknowledges the need to assess the impact of these activities within available resource and the Cambridge Admissions Office is accordingly taking this work forward. However, it is noted that such monitoring will necessarily be restricted to larger scale events and will be limited depending upon such service as UCAS is able to provide, since widening participation activities often result in student applications to universities other than Cambridge.



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