ANNUAL REPORT
2017–18

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 2017–18 admissions year. It was a tremendously busy and successful year during which UAC pursued its innovation agenda, releasing Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks (ATARs) on the blockchain and making promising developments in the area of artificial intelligence. These visionary achievements have raised UAC's profile in the higher education sector and set the pulse for innovation.

The Board's oversight of key strategic, financial and risk issues was supported by the highly productive work of its sub-committees, including the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, Audit Committee, and Business Development Committee. Each of the sub-committees draws on the skills of the Board overall to bring particular focus to the issues being determined. It allows a process of robust debate to occur ahead of wider consideration at the Board meeting and I am most thankful for the experience and leadership shown by all Board members through this important governance process.

In January 2018 Mr Michael Berg took over from Ms Louise Hicks as Company Secretary. I thank Ms Hicks for her service to the Board, and warmly welcome Mr Berg to UAC. The Board membership remained otherwise unchanged.

It is very pleasing to see UAC partnering with the Commonwealth Government and the other state-based admissions centres to build the national admissions higher education information platform. The new platform will centralise thousands of on-campus and online courses across Australia, making it easier for prospective students to find the right course for them. Such initiatives strengthen the admissions system more broadly across Australia and provide a foundation for future collaboration and growth.

Earlier this year UAC launched an exciting new chapter in the evolution of its brand. The change to UAC's brand is more than just cosmetic; it's symbolic of the ambitious transformation that is taking place at a strategic level. UAC is growing significantly in size, client base and offerings. The new brand helps to communicate that growth, as well as the direction UAC is headed in and what it stands for today. UAC's long-term brand positioning will play a vital role in addressing the challenges and opportunities of our evolving sector.

In closing, I extend my sincere thanks to the members of the UAC Board. I would also like to acknowledge all UAC staff for their ongoing efforts, shared commitment and positive impact. We have many successes to celebrate.

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

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The 2017–18 admissions year was an eventful one for UAC, marked by significant changes that yielded positive results. We took considerable actions to strengthen UAC's core business, to expand in new directions and to reposition UAC as a leader in technology solutions.

In keeping with our efforts to lead positive change for students, UAC was the first tertiary admissions centre in Australia to release the majority of university offers to Year 12 students before Christmas, relieving students of the long wait for offers and giving them extra time to consider their options.

This year we continued to work closely with the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training and other state-based admissions centres to build a national higher education admissions information platform. The Course Seeker website, due for launch in late 2018, will give students access to comprehensive, consistent and comparable information about all higher education course options, admission criteria and application pathways.

The higher education landscape is more dynamic than ever, and universities are actively looking for alternative student recruitment strategies. UAC has been quick to respond to this change in demand. We've leveraged our data and analytics capabilities to identify business opportunities, drive process improvement and develop services for institutions. To date, we've successfully implemented seven bespoke admissions solutions for both metropolitan and regional universities, and the appetite for our expertise continues to grow. This ongoing expansion has been made possible by a renewed investment in resourcing, talent acquisition and staff development.

UAC positioned itself at the forefront of innovation by releasing Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) documents to over 74,000 NSW HSC students using state-of-the-art blockchain technology. This technology was embedded in ATAR notices to enable document verification, eliminating the potential for fraud. This was also the first time that the complex process of calculating ATARs was undertaken entirely in-house. Going forward, we'll be using machine learning technology to develop a course recommendation tool for Year 12 students.

To symbolise the wider transformation taking place at UAC, in early 2018 we unveiled a new brand strategy, marking the most dramatic change to our visual identity in over a decade. UAC's new brand includes a redesigned logo that both references our rich past and moves our brand forward. UAC's brand initiative was supported by a redeveloped website that provides a more dynamic and relevant user experience. As our suite of products and services expands, our rejuvenated brand positions us well for future opportunities. It aims to attract new audiences and build even stronger connections with existing partners.

We move forward with confidence in our strategic direction, as well as our unique offerings of products and services. I'd like to thank the Board, management and all staff members for their efforts and contributions to UAC. I look forward to us working together to make an important and lasting impact on the future of tertiary admissions.

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; and
– 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 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.

UAC BOARD 2017–18

Chair

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

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 and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Adelaide.

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

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

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

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

He is also the Chair of UAC's Nomination and Remuneration Committee.

Other members

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

Mr Damien Israel
Audit Committee Chair
Chief Finance Officer
University of Wollongong
Appointed July 2011

Mr Scott Nichols
Users Committee Chair
Director, Student Connect
University of Canberra
Appointed September 2014

Professor Tyrone Carlin
Financial Reporting and Regulation
The University of Sydney
Appointed January 2017

Ms Nicole Grainger-Marsh
Consulting Services
Appointed January 2016

Ms Claire Hopkins
Consulting Services
Appointed January 2016

Mr Robert Chard
Business Development Committee Chair
General Manager Corporate and Enterprise
Business Solutions
Konica Minolta
Appointed January 2017

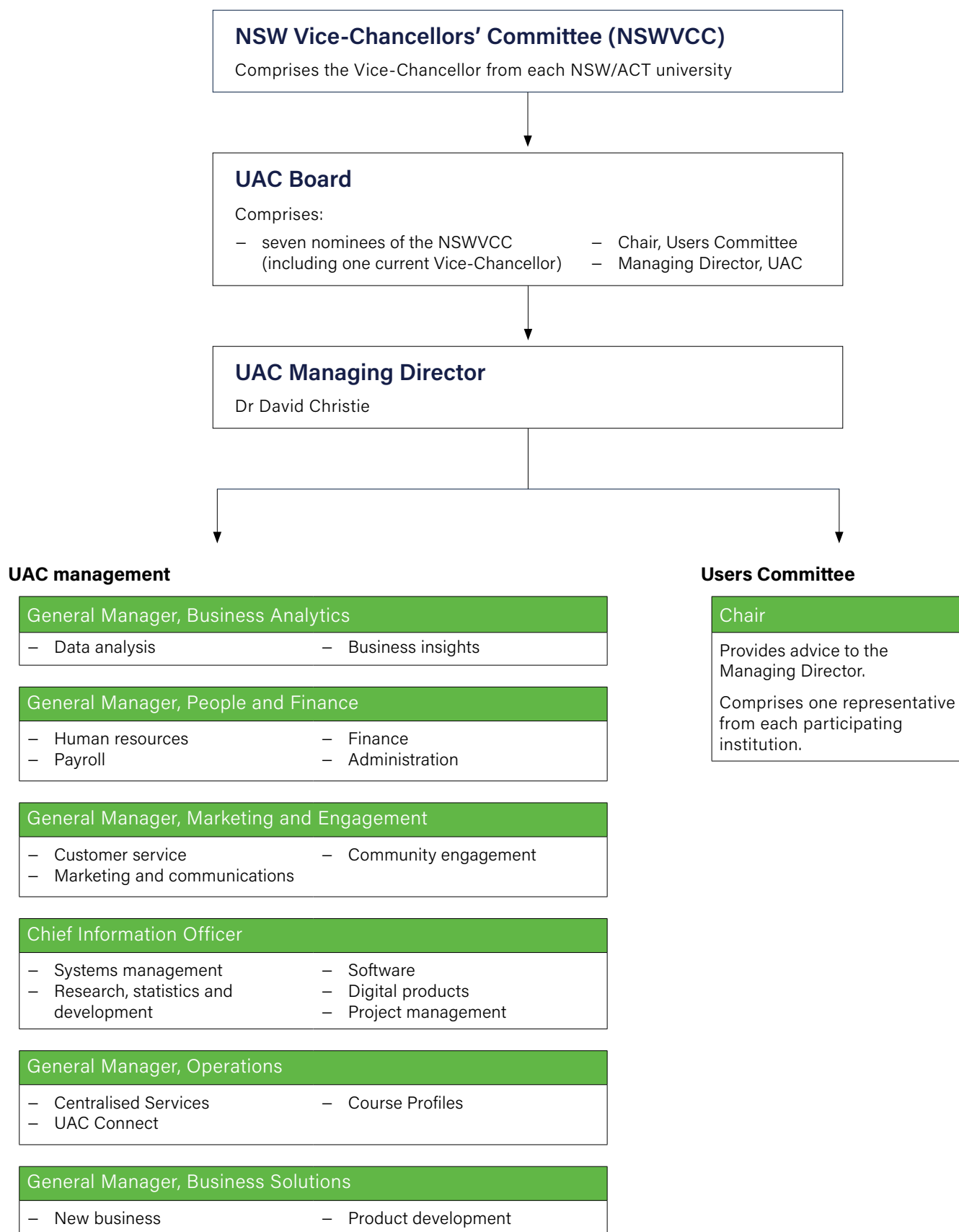**Dr David Christie**
Managing Director, UAC
Appointed March 2015

Officer

Mr Michael Berg
Company Secretary
Appointed January 2018

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NSWVCC)

Comprises the Vice-Chancellor from each NSW/ACT university

UAC Board

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

UAC Managing Director

Dr David Christie

UAC management

General Manager, Business Analytics

- Data analysis
- Business insights

General Manager, People and Finance

- Human resources
- Payroll
- Finance
- Administration

General Manager, Marketing and Engagement

- Customer service
- Marketing and communications
- Community engagement

Chief Information Officer

- Systems management
- Research, statistics and development
- Software
- Digital products
- Project management

General Manager, Operations

- Centralised Services
- UAC Connect
- Course Profiles

General Manager, Business Solutions

- New business
- Product 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 2017–18

Participating

In the 2017–18 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 2017–18* 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 2017–18 admissions period, UAC worked with 10 apply direct institutions. These were:
– Academy of Information Technology
– Academy of Interactive Entertainment
– Academy of Music and Performing Arts
– Aspire Institute
– Australian Film Television and Radio School
– Avondale College of Higher Education*
– JMC Academy
– Raffles College of Design and Commerce
– The University of Notre Dame Australia
– William Angliss Institute

*new in 2017–18

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 opposite for UAC's management structure and relationships.

UAC IN NUMBERS 2017-18

Participating institutions
27

Apply direct institutions
10

ATAR Advice Notices generated
76,912

Undergraduate

Courses offered
2,276

Domestic applications
83,295

Domestic offers
110,332

International applications
3,113

International offers
5,483

Postgraduate

Courses offered
898

Domestic applications
7,685

Domestic offers
8,673

Equity

Equity Scholarship applications
9,783

Equity Scholarships offered
2,738

Educational Access Scheme applications
19,890

Schools Recommendation Schemes applications
11,898

Customer Service

Students, teachers, careers advisers and parents reached through community engagement
200,000+

Phone calls
63,951

Emails
17,744

Social media engagements
5,500

Qualifications Assessment Service

People assessed
2,000

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016–20

The UAC Strategic Plan 2016–2020 builds on over 30 years of developing and providing robust, innovative and flexible processes and systems to support admission into higher education. The outsourcing of admissions process to UAC has been both efficient and expedient for universities, enabling them to focus upon their core capabilities of learning and teaching, research and external engagement.

The rapid expansion of the higher education market that followed the removal of enrolment limits has seen universities become increasingly competitive. As a consequence, universities have directly admitted students in greater numbers, which has led to a decrease in UAC's share of applications, especially from non-Year 12 students.

The UAC Strategic Plan 2016–2020 seeks to address the decline in UAC applications through the provision of new services, while consolidating our core and continuing to work with institution partners to meet their evolving needs.

WHY WE'RE HERE

To be at the forefront of access to higher education.

WHAT WE ASPIRE TO BE

The pre-eminent provider of admission-related services.

OUR APPROACH

– We're curious, inquisitive and want to understand how we can do things better.
– We're fast and flexible in achieving our goals.
– We are the best at what we do.
– We actively promote a culture of integrity, fairness and honesty.

OUR GOALS

1. Stay No. 1 in the school leaver market
2. Provide services people want
3. Work smarter and leaner
4. Position UAC as the leading tertiary admission centre
5. Diversify our business

SERVICES

Undergraduate admissions

UAC administers undergraduate admissions for domestic and selected international applicants. This includes a centralised application and assessment process; management of the allocation process; and the provision of associated resources, information and services for applicants, potential applicants, other interested parties and the general public.

Postgraduate admissions

UAC administers postgraduate admissions for selected coursework courses for domestic applicants. This includes the provision of a centralised application and assessment process; management of the allocation process; and the provision of associated resources, information and services for applicants, potential applicants, other interested parties and the general public.

Australian Tertiary Admission Rank generation

UAC manages the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), including website release, distribution of ATAR Advice Notices, management of the ATAR Enquiry Centre and the provision of associated resources for students, teachers, parents and the general public.

Qualifications Assessment Service

UAC's online Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS) allows potential applicants to have their qualifications assessed before they apply for tertiary study.

Equity scheme management

Educational Access Schemes

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

Equity Scholarships

Equity Scholarships (ES) assist financially disadvantaged students with the costs associated with tertiary study. UAC administers ES for UAC applicants and current university students, including the provision of centralised applications and assessment, offer processes and the provision of associated publications, information and services.

Schools Recommendation Schemes

Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS) are one way institutions make early offers to current Australian Year 12 students who have applied for undergraduate admission through UAC. SRS applications are assessed centrally at UAC using criteria other than (or in addition to) the ATAR, including school recommendations, senior secondary studies, personal awards and achievements.

UAC Connect

UAC Connect is a bespoke admissions solution that provides full coverage of the admissions process from application to offer generation. It involves the integration of three key systems currently servicing undergraduate, postgraduate and international admissions: online application, expert management functionality and data warehouse.

THE ATAR

Each year more than 55,000 school leavers apply through UAC for admission to courses offered by universities in NSW and the ACT. For the majority of courses there are more applicants than places. Applicants must be ranked to allow selection to take place.

This ranking is determined by the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

The ATAR provides a measure of a student's overall academic achievement in relation to that of other students and helps universities rank applicants for selection into their courses. The ATAR is a rank, not a mark. It is a number between 0.00 and 99.95 and indicates a student's position relative to 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 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 Friday 15 December 2017 to 57,061 students, 1,105 more than in 2016. This is one of the busiest days of the year for UAC. UAC's ATAR Enquiry Centre opened on this day and ran until Friday 22 December. The centre received 745 calls from students enquiring about their ATAR. In addition, UAC's customer contact centre received 5,436 phone enquiries as well as media enquiries from all major media outlets.

The median ATAR for 2017 was 69.00, slightly higher than in 2016. The median ATAR for females was 70.15 whereas the median ATAR for males was 67.65. More than 48 per cent of students received an ATAR of 70.00 or above.

The Technical Committee on Scaling produces an annual report on the scaling of the NSW Higher School Certificate. These reports can be found on UAC's website at *uac.edu.au/ scalingreports*.

INITIATIVES AND DEVELOPMENTS

ATAR ON THE BLOCKCHAIN

In an Australian first, UAC generated more than 76,000 official Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) documents using state-of-the-art Ethereum blockchain technology. The technology was embedded in ATAR notices to allow self-verification of the document, eliminating the potential for fraud. Releasing ATAR documents on the blockchain was a cost-effective solution that simplified the process for Year 12 students, who in previous years had received their ATAR documents in the post.

INTRODUCTION OF A PRE-CHRISTMAS OFFER ROUND

In 2017 UAC released offers to more than 42,000 university applicants in a new pre-Christmas offer round – December Round 2. This was the first time the majority of university offers for Year 12 students were released before Christmas and UAC was the first tertiary admissions centre in Australia to give students extra time to consider their future options.

UAC CONNECT

This year UAC partnered with several metropolitan and regional universities to implement customised UAC Connect solutions.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) implemented UAC Connect to offer applicants a new-look application system that allows them to register using their Facebook, Google or LinkedIn accounts. The user-friendly online application provides a streamlined, comprehensive automated assessment and offer generation service, where many applicants can be made system-derived offers without the need for CSU to see the application.

UAC Connect provides Year 12 students applying to Macquarie University's Global Leadership Program (GLEP) with a secure, user-friendly application that is accessible anywhere, anytime and on any device. UAC Connect also provided Macquarie University with a highly-automated process for the assessment of Year 11 qualifications, a major component of the GLEP assessment criteria.

UAC Connect provided the Australian National University with a streamlined application process for Year 12 students, featuring a single online application and offer process, covering admissions, accommodation and scholarships. This bespoke UAC Connect solution also included co-curricular activities in the assessment process.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS 2017–18

PEOPLE AND FINANCE

The People and Finance department undertake 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 and insurance matters, and coordination of the records management activities of the organisation.

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

During the year we improved our budgeting and forecasting capabilities through the development of a series of interlinked spreadsheets. This has resulted in more accurate forecasts and much faster month-end completion times and report distribution.

This year also saw the completion of service agreements with all of UAC's member institutions.

People and Culture

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

During 2017–18 admissions UAC operated with 74 permanent employees, and 42 fixed-term temporary and casual staff. This represents a 17 per cent increase in staff numbers during the year and reflects the increased revenue growth that has occurred during the past two years. Maintaining our level of capability and managing growth has been challenging but has resulted in staff who are well-equipped to meet the requirements of an ever-changing sector.

Tim Gleeson
General Manager, People and Finance

As part of this year's remit, we have continued to invest in the future leadership potential of staff by implementing several personal and professional development opportunities across the organisation. We have also employed technology to bring efficiencies to our onboarding and induction processes as well as providing an online course library to support staff in strengthening their own capabilities.

Looking ahead, our focus is to continue to provide staff with the tools and resources they need to achieve their goals, in an engaging environment. We are committed to providing the best possible experience to our staff as we continue our journey of growth.

James Kevin
General Manager, Business Solutions

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

In 2017, the Institutional Business department was restructured and rebadged as Business Solutions, tasked with two core responsibilities: account management and business development. Specific client services roles were created, to deepen relationships with participating institutions and to ensure all current and future customer needs are exceeded. The identification of new opportunities and markets (including interstate) remains the business development imperative of the division.

Both business streams rely on the development of UAC products and services, along with their commercialisation, integration and implementation.

The white-label online portal service, UAC Connect, has spearheaded the success of the division, with 35,000 applications processed this year. This represents almost 30 per cent of all UAC applications annually. Six institutions are now UAC Connect clients.

Macquarie University launched their UAC Connect service this year. UAC Connect underpinned a 170 per cent increase in applicants for Macquarie's Global Leadership Entry Program (GLEP), which was 25 per cent above forecasts.

Western Sydney University showed its faith in UAC Connect by extending its portal program (all undergraduate and postgraduate admissions) to include its guaranteed entry scheme – HSC True Rewards. Charles Sturt University was also contracted to the service, to be implemented in early 2019.

Business Solutions has also focused on opportunities outside the universities this year, pursuing partnerships with commercial operators, as well as public/private organisations in the VET sector.

OPERATIONS

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

Undergraduate

In the 2017–18 admissions year, 83,295 undergraduate applications were received from Year 12 and non-Year 12 applicants. This was a decrease from the previous year of 7.4 per cent, driven by fewer non-Year 12 applications. This market segment was down 5,924 – a decline partially explained by changes in admissions practices at some of our institutions, which resulted in more direct admissions and by a general flattening of the market.

The decline in applications had a minor impact on offer volumes. Over 110,332 offers were generated and the largest offer round was December Round 2. The recent pattern of growth in offers to pathway courses continued.

Postgraduate

In 2017–18, UAC received 7,685 applications for postgraduate study – a decrease of 20.7 per cent compared with last year. There were 8,673 offers made, a further reduction from the previous year. This decline can be partially explained by changes in admissions practices at some of our institutions resulting in more direct admissions.

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.

For the 2017–18 admission year, 3,113 applications were received from international students, an increase of 16.4 per cent from the previous year.

Assessment

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

Nerida Bewick
General Manager, Operations

While selection of Year 12 applicants for tertiary study is ATAR-based and assessment is straightforward, non-Year 12s (those who have not completed their Year 12 qualification in the current school year) may be assessed on, for example, professional qualifications, work experience or previous tertiary study. Applicants with international qualifications are assessed using schedules developed by benchmarking each country's secondary qualification standards against the NSW HSC and ATAR.

In 2017–18, UAC had a permanent team of 11 highly experienced assessment officers and 22 fixed-term assessors across two units: Centralised Services and Connect.

To ensure UAC's assessments are fair and equitable for all applicants, Assessment staff stay abreast of educational reforms in Australia and around the world.

Equity

UAC's Equity unit manages programs on behalf of participating institutions addressing access to and participation in tertiary study for disadvantaged students, including the Commonwealth Scholarships Programme, which 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 and choosing.

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

In the 2017–18 admissions period UAC received 19,890 EAS applications – 8,122 of these were received from students and 11,768 were automatically generated. This is a slight decrease on the applications received in the previous year.

Equity Scholarships

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

Equity Scholarships through UAC comprise:
– Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships funded by the Australian Government
– Institution Equity Scholarships (IES) funded by individual universities, donations or sponsorship.

During 2017–18 admissions, UAC received 9,783 ES applications, an increase on the 7,697 applications received in the previous year. The increase in application numbers was in response to the Commonwealth's decision to convert Student Start-Up Scholarships, administered by Centrelink, from grants to loans.

Equity Scholarship applications are open to UAC applicants for admission and enrolled students, VTAC/QTAC applicants and direct applicants; 46 per cent of the applicant pool in 2017–18 were UAC applicants for admission.

Schools Recommendation Schemes

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

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

For 2017–18 admissions, SRS applications opened on Wednesday 2 August 2017 and closed at midnight on Friday 29 September 2017.

A total of 11,898 SRS applications from 833 schools were received, compared with 9,804 SRS applications from 910 schools for 2016–17 admissions. This represents an increase of 2,094 or 21 per cent from last year.

10,892 SRS applicants were from NSW, 669 from the ACT and 337 from interstate.

Other services

Qualifications Assessment Service

For applicants who wish to have their qualifications assessed before they apply, UAC offers a Qualifications Assessment Service (QAS). In 2017–18 UAC reviewed qualifications for approximately 2,000 people who were then able to understand their eligibility for entry to tertiary study.

MARKETING AND ENGAGEMENT

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

Customer service

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

In UAC's peak period from August 2017 to February 2018, the centre handled 54,966 calls and 14,452 emails, and responded to over 500 Facebook direct messages.

The busiest day for UAC is the day ATARs are released. On this day, UAC's customer contact centre received 1,725 phone enquiries, and 114 emails and enquiries from face-to-face visitors. This is in addition to the calls received by the ATAR Enquiry Centre.

Other days on which we answered a higher volume of enquiries were: 29 September (on-time closing) – 974 calls and 114 emails; December Round 2 offer day – 1,048 calls and 162 emails; January Round 1 offer day – 894 calls and 114 emails.

Community Engagement

UAC's engagement with schools increased in 2018. Every school in NSW received information from the Community Engagement team about the services they provide. These include student/parent information sessions held in person at schools or via video conference, school staff development sessions and career adviser network presentations. Community Engagement also expanded their reach interstate, attending student information sessions in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania.

The Community Engagement team attended 71 career expos and 47 university events, including open days, where several institutions took up the offer of UAC support at their event. This year the universities that UAC worked with included the Australian Catholic University, Australian National University, Charles Sturt University, Macquarie University, Southern Cross University, University of New England, University of Sydney, University of Wollongong, UNSW Australia and Western Sydney University. The team also presented information at student/parent information evenings at individual universities on subject selection, the ATAR and applying to university through UAC.

Kim Paino
General Manager, Marketing and Engagement

In 2018 the Community Engagement team travelled a distance equivalent to more than twice the length of Australia. The team attended 215 events and delivered 213 presentations to a total of over 200,000 people.

Marketing

UAC's marketing team produces a variety of content for our website, printed resources and digital marketing assets to support all our audiences, including prospective undergraduate, postgraduate and international applicants.

UAC rebrand

In March 2017, UAC engaged creative agency Campaign Director to develop a new brand strategy and visual style for UAC. After several months of collaboration, and with comprehensive brand guidelines completed, we worked with photographer Kat Stanley to capture a catalogue of

photographs to compliment the new brand. The team consequently produced a large volume of new materials ahead of the launch of the new brand, including stationery, promotional items, exhibition and building signage, and even some baked goods and confectionary.

On 11 April 2018, UAC unveiled the new brand at a launch event held at Carriageworks in Sydney, marking the most dramatic change to our visual identity in over a decade. The 90 guests in attendance enjoyed canapés, martinis and a live performance by jazz quartet The Swingin' Blades.

UAC's new brand includes a redesigned logo—a modern take on our pathway logo—that references our rich past whilst moving our brand forward. The new tagline *Access your potential* makes a resounding promise: we can get you started on the journey towards reaching your full potential.

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 a million unique visitors each year, it provides the organisation with extensive exposure across the country and internationally.

As a result of a successful tender process in July 2017, UAC engaged creative agency Deepend to provide professional advice and direction with regards to user experience, design, development and overall website best practice. A key component of the project was the migration of content from HTML to a Content Management System (CMS).

Representatives from across the organisation, including all members of the Marketing department, participated in workshops to discuss and define the needs and parameters of the project. Once the information architecture and design were in place, the CMS development was completed in-house at UAC.

2017-18 INTERESTING STATS
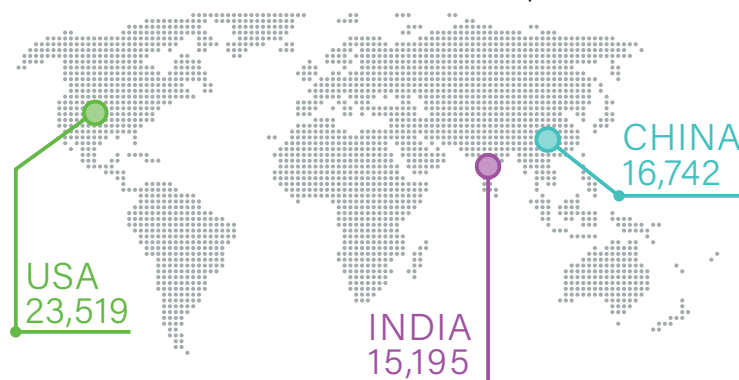
PEAK USAGE DAYS: visits

ATAR release 15 December 2017 — 306,293

December Round 2 offers (first offers based on ATAR) — 258,303

NSW USERS 803,732
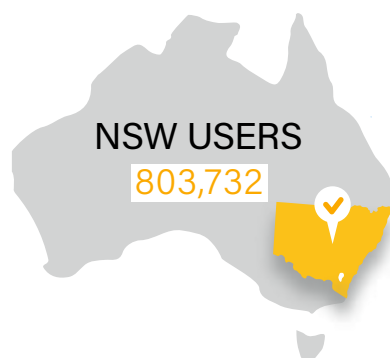
INTERNATIONAL REACH: unique visitors

USA 23,519

CHINA 16,742

INDIA 15,195

On 9 April 2018 we launched our redesigned site. A core element of UAC's new brand strategy, the website's fresh look and improved navigation features provide a more dynamic user experience.

Feedback from stakeholders and users has been positive, and the Marketing team continues to develop and fine-tune content to provide prospective students and their advisers with accurate and accessible information on higher education options.

Publications

In 2017–18, UAC's flagship publications included:
– *UAC Guide 2017–18*, a comprehensive resource with application information and lists of courses for domestic undergraduate applicants
– *UAC International 2017–18*, a booklet outlining application information and admission requirements for international students (non-citizens who have an Australian Year 12 qualification) who are eligible to apply through UAC
– *University Entry Requirements 2020 for Year 10 students*, designed to help Year 10 students make decisions about which HSC courses to take in Years 11 and 12
– *All About UAC for 2017*: Year 11 and 12 Students, containing detailed information on the application process.

UAC supports equity of access to higher education and produces a range of publications to explain the application and eligibility processes. These publications are available in print and can be downloaded from our website.

We also produce a series of publications for students, parents and career advisers which are distributed by the Community Engagement team and can also be downloaded from our website.

Newsletters

UAC publishes two periodical newsletters: *UAC News*, a quarterly e-newsletter for principals, teachers and careers advisers; and *Directions*, a regular e-newsletter for applicants, careers advisers, institution staff and international student agents. Both newsletters advise readers of important information about admissions, upcoming events, key dates and scholarship information.

Media

This year UAC's media team concentrated its efforts on targeted outreach, resulting in increased media coverage by metropolitan and regional outlets, including a feature article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on Helen Tam, UAC's Research, Statistics and Development Manager.

UAC's media team continued to work closely with the Research, Statistics and Development team to publish

statistics and commentary at significant points in the application cycle, such as the breakdown of semester 1 applicant and offer numbers.

Campaigns

In April 2018, we launched a digital advertising campaign to raise awareness of the new UAC brand among our key audience groups.

Our video *Dreamers* was broadcast almost 100 times on Prime7 and WIN television.

Fifteen and 30 second spots of *Dreamers* on tenplay, 9Now and 7plus resulted in 143,858 impressions; 96 per cent of viewers watched the entire advertisement.

We used YouTube in-stream video which generated 81,725 impressions; 65 per cent of viewers watched the entire advertisement.

On Spotify, an audio-only version of *Dreamers* resulted in 168,519 impressions.

We also posted *Dreamers* to our Facebook page and created a campaign landing page on our website, achieving further critical exposure.

Other projects

In 2017, UAC PINs were emailed to NSW and ACT Year 12 students. This digital distribution replaced a mailout, saved over $135,000 and was successfully delivered to 66 per cent of students. Using blockchain technology, ATAR Notices were distributed digitally to all NSW HSC students with security and verification, resulting in a cost-saving of more than $65,000. UAC's ability to track delivery and open rates of emails and electronic documents is now a valuable source of intelligence.

Social media

Social media continued to enable UAC's Marketing team to engage with and provide advice and support to prospective students throughout their higher education journey.

UAC's social media audience grew steadily throughout the year. Over 9,800 people follow us on Facebook and our posts reached a total of 495,600 people. On Twitter we have a following of only 600, however we managed over 130,000 impressions. We gained 163 followers on Instagram and published 20 stories on Snapchat – both channels are managed by the Community Engagement team.

On Wednesday 6 December 2017, UAC hosted a Facebook Live event. Responding to viewers' questions, topics included the ATAR, scaling, offers, pathways and equity schemes. The video reached 9,700 people and was viewed over 3,300 times by prospective students, parents and careers advisers. It generated 112 questions and comments, 47 reactions and 22 shares.

In 2017–18, video continued to be our most engaging content type; we increased our video output and made over 25 hours of content available.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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

In 2017–18 IT undertook the following key initiatives:

ATAR released on blockchain

To improve the security of ATAR Advice Notices and as a cost-saving measure, UAC transitioned from traditional print ATAR certificates to digital certificates. Year 12 students received their ATAR Notices in the form of a digitally signed PDF document. The digital signing of the ATARs was achieved using a blockchain signature developed by UAC.

UAC Website Development

The Information Technology department worked closely with Marketing and Engagement to develop the new UAC website. This involved setting up a Content Management System (CMS) and creating webpage templates and workflows to enable the Marketing team to manage webpage content.

Infrastructure

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) with two factor authentication was implemented to enable UAC staff to access the UAC LAN and work remotely as needed.

Application Systems

Online application systems for Equity Scholarships (ES) and Educational Assistance Schemes (EAS) were implemented, replacing print application systems. As well as reducing application processing costs, this has also reduced the business risk of loss of applications in the event of fire or water damage at UAC offices.

Core Systems

The Software Development team completed the redevelopment of the core UAC admissions system to the latest Java frameworks and made significant upgrades to the standard correspondence artefacts generated by these systems.

Dudley Collinson
Chief Information Officer

Custom systems

Custom systems and services have been developed to meet the specific needs of our institutional clients. Institution-branded services provide solutions that can be integrated to back end systems providing an enhanced user experience, tailored workflows, trackable correspondence and seamless data exchange. During this period, UAC partnered with five institutions to develop tailored solutions. These services include integrated applications, early assessment, leadership selection, accommodation, scholarships and direct integration with student systems.

Main admissions period

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

Key dates and volumes included:
– ATAR release on 15 December 2017 – between 8.30am and 10.30am the system handled 43,580 unique student ATAR retrievals and 6,327 subsequent changes of preference.
– December round 2 released on the 21 December 2017 – between 7:30 and 9am 23,248 unique applicants logged on to retrieve their offers.
– January Round 1 released on 12 January 2018 – between 7:30am and 10am 16,808 unique applicants logged on to retrieve their offers.

Research, Statistics and Development

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

In 2017–18, RSD was involved in the following projects and activities:
– the calculation of ATARs
– ongoing development of methodology to compare applicant qualifications for equitable assessment
– processing of external data requests
– ad hoc statistical analyses of UAC's applicants and participating institutions.

BUSINESS ANALYTICS

The Business Analytics unit completed its first full year of operation in 2017–18 with positive contributions to many facets of the UAC mission.

The focus of the Business Analytics team is to use the vast data that UAC generates to gain insight into the business, drive analytical decision-making, strategy and business planning.

Our mission was enhanced this year by gaining access to larger external data sets. These enabled UAC to not only view its own performance but also its position within the sector in general. The addition of this data meant UAC could participate more fully in conversations around the national approach to admissions and success and retention with institutions, peak bodies and government departments. It also assisted in driving business planning and everyday decision-making within UAC.

Key areas of analysis this year included examining the effects the influx of baby bonus kids will have on institutions. We estimated that domestic university applications will increase by 11 per cent between 2022 and 2026 – the equivalent of four more universities' domestic intake. How the higher education sector will cater for this influx of students in the future was the topic of this report.

We also looked at success and retention rates for students in tertiary studies by plotting the 2010 HSC cohort through their higher education journey.

In addition to internal analysis we also undertake bespoke analysis for our institutions to help them understand areas of the higher education market and changes that are affecting the sector.

Next we are turning our focus to data governance and continuing to gather and use the vast sources of data available to UAC and its member institutions.

Anthony Manny
General Manager, Business Analytics
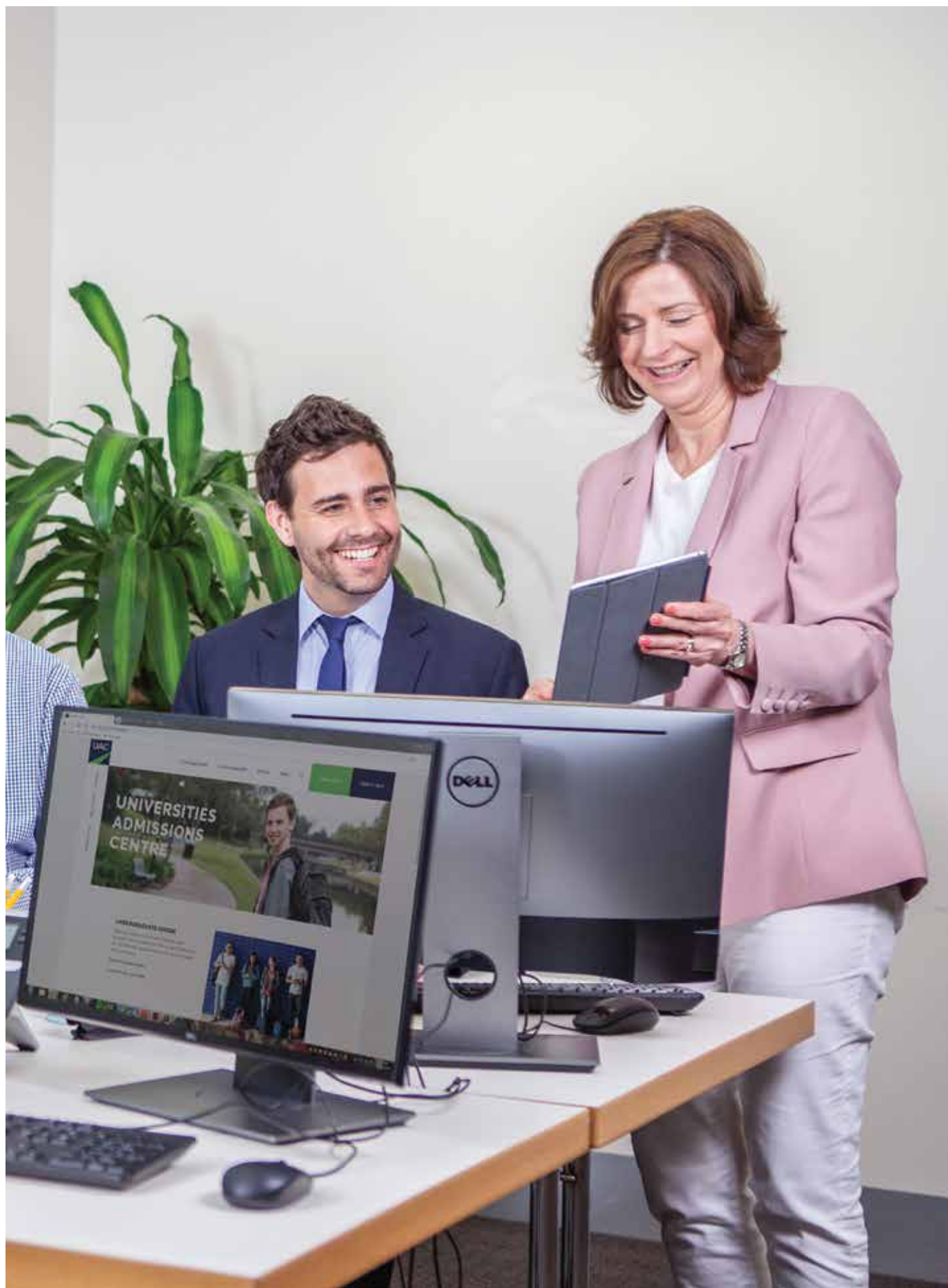
ANNUAL REPORT 2017–18

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

About this publication

The UAC Annual Report 2017–18 gives an overview of the operations of the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) for the 2017–18 admissions year and includes highlights of that year.

ACCESS YOUR POTENTIAL.