

DPSG SPRING CONSULTATION - ON THE CREATION OF A SINGLE ADMISSIONS PROCESS INTEGRATING ALL ART & DESIGN ADMISSIONS WITHIN THE SAME SYSTEM

DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP with

ART & DESIGN WORKING GROUP

**29 April 2008 – For return 21 May 2008 at the
latest (responses would be welcome any time
after 16 May)**

**For completion on behalf of the respective
Higher Education, Further or Secondary
Education institution**

**Please note this consultation has questions for
response by all institutions – HEIs, FECs and Secondary
Education providers not just those offering Art & Design
subjects**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This consultation on proposed changes to admission arrangements below has arisen from Recommendation 16 of the Wilson report which seeks to **replace “the two-route application system for Art & Design by a single admissions system”**. The responses to the consultation issued through the Delivery Partnership (DP) in summer 2007 supported and recognised the need for change but sought a more radical solution that would better address the current complexity from an applicant’s perspective. Building on this feedback a new set of proposals have been developed and the DP is now seeking views, through a second consultation, on these new proposals which **now results in changes affecting all undergraduate courses whatever the subject**. This is consistent with the Delivery Partnership’s agreement that all changes proposed should be consulted on. The simplification of the process has been hard because of conflicting interests and needs. Considerable work to reach the current conclusion has been undertaken within Art & Design Working Group of the Delivery Partnership, significantly informed by workshops with over 100 participants during February to explore with wide range of practices and viewpoints.

1.2 Looking at current practices the vast majority of institutions recruit through two processes for the entry to the same course - the concurrent Route A and the sequential Route B. Applicants making 5 choices will use both Route A and Route B or could use Route A only. Having reviewed the complexity and the confusion within the current process, **the proposed way forward takes an applicant view and merges practices to create one process** with single course codes; common processing dates, puts in place additional functionality and no longer uses orders of preference and sequential processing. It recognises that the outer boundaries of Art & Design are no longer logically definable and do not need to be distinguished if one single system is in place. It also recognises the likely future impact of changing entry qualifications eg 14-19 Diplomas and the multidisciplinary choices that applicants are also making. It gives the option for many other subjects to use the extra functionality put in place to support the core of Art & Design courses.

1.3 In essence it **closes the segregated process for Art & Design courses (Route B) and puts at the heart the particular character of Art & Design admissions, with their examination of an applicant’s real work and interests (through portfolios and interviewing)** as an additional feature of one standard single admissions process (adaptation of Route A). It also requires we build a revised mechanism that will be secure enough to be straightforward and simple for applicants, while being flexible enough to accommodate the range of recruiting and selecting courses. It must respond to the breadth of institutional missions, noting also that popular institutions may nevertheless have recruiting courses and visa versa.

1.4 **The inevitable consequence of the merging of processes and mitigating the risks for institutions most affected, is that the current standard system dealing with other subjects must also change**. For good reason, the draft proposal questions the current January closing date and explored whether to adjust course choices. This consultation therefore cannot be restricted to viewpoints of those solely processing Art & Design courses and needs a response from the higher education institution, school or college as a whole, while also requiring the in depth understanding of Art & Design practitioners. The rationale for the change is described through background papers attached as **Appendix 1 giving the rationale for changes and reasons why some options explored were not taken forward and Appendix 2 giving background and data**, these show trend data, questions some of the myths as well as highlighting anecdotal and historic misconceptions and explain the journey travelled since last August which has brought the thinking to this point. **Appendix 3 shows the proposed process as viewed by applicant or HE provider**.

1.5 This **consultation process is compressed** as it has been trapped by our need to take time to find and explore possible solutions with practitioners as against the lead in times for change and specification. This has meant decisions on fundamental changes are needed by late May in the first instance to be part of changes for 2010 intake and 2009 entry cycle. A firm decision in early Summer gives just enough time to make the necessary changes to software and process for those applying during 2009. The extent and sophistication of the processes to support interview and portfolio can be further finessed and will be subject to further iterations with practitioners. This consultation however is being used to test the range of support for a number of proposed enhancements. **A request for response and comment via the attached questionnaire is shown as Annex 1 and is set for return by 21 May 2008 at the latest**.

PLEASE NOTE no response will be taken to mean that you rely on the good advice of the Art & Design Working Group and the final decision of the Deliver Partnership Steering Group and the subsequent consideration and implementation as appropriate by the UCAS Board.

Annex 1 Questionnaire for return by 21 May 2008 at the latest

Appendix 1 Explanational of fundamental changes

Appendix 2 Commentary & data

Appendix 3 Proposed process if all aspects agreed

DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP CONSULTATION: Proposal to create a single consolidated system of application for all undergraduate courses integrating Art & Design within the same process

If you would like to complete this consultation **on-line** please contact **Hazel Flynn, GuildHE** – hazel.flynn@guildhe.ac.uk and the paper will be emailed to you.

Please complete your response below and send / email it to **Hazel Flynn, GuildHE by 21 MAY 2008 at the latest** addressed to Hazel Flynn, GuildHE (DPSG Spring consultation), 3rd floor Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HQ or E-mail: hazel.flynn@guildhe.ac.uk
If you have any questions regarding the consultation please contact Alice Hynes at GuildHE
Tel: 020 7387 7711

Name: Dr Geoff Parks	
Role/Title: Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges	
This response has been agreed on behalf of this institution? (i.e. as approved by the head of institution)	YES
Name of institution: University of Cambridge	
Respondent Contact email: gtp10@cam.ac.uk	
Respondent Contact phone: 01223 332799	
Subject provision	Please tick one
The institution offers courses its describes as Art & Design	
The institution offers no courses it would describe as Art & Design	✓
Type of institution	Please tick one
University with Route B courses	
University College, Specialist Institution or HEI with Route B courses	
University with NO Route B courses	✓
University College, Specialist Institution or HEI with NO Route B courses	
Further Education College with Route B courses	
Further Education College with NO Route B courses	
School – State (including LA, SSAT, CTC)	
School – Independent	
6th Form College	
Adult education/Continuing Education College	
Other (please specify)	
Main Location of institution	Please tick one
England	✓
Northern Ireland	
Scotland	
Wales	

Please return to Hazel Flynn, GuildHE – hazel.flynn@guildhe.ac.uk by 5.00 pm on 21 May 2008 at the latest

The proposal from the Delivery Partnership under consultation seeks to create one single simplified admissions route, which sets aside the concept of a Route A and a Route B, while taking forward useful aspects of both. The solution, **which affects all subjects in one way or another**, promotes features which aim to benefit the applicant, to make the process much simpler, and to offer some additional functionality to improve information and communication. It would require action by UCAS, HE & FE provider institutions and the Schools/ Colleges on information and guidance; on data and software; on hard copy material and training - hence the target of 2010 entry for its introduction. Although various parts of this proposal, set out below, could be viewed separately they are the outcome of a holistic detailed consideration and should be viewed in that light. Some aspects are recommended as a way forward by the Delivery Partnership and in other cases views are sought of different options. Although initiated by consideration of Art & Design, and having significant consequences for those courses, the impact would be on all UCAS undergraduate admissions.

1. Sequential processing

All applicant choices should be considered concurrently with no expression of preference

Please tick one -

Agree

Disagree

Rationale for proposal 1:

The current Route B sequential and preferential process is now seen by many as being unfair to applicants, restricting their choices and confusing. It is difficult for applicants to judge the order to place choices and seen from an applicant viewpoint prevents them from being considered by all of the institutions which interest them. This order of preference method was set aside sometime ago on all other subjects including highly selecting undergraduate areas such as medicine. The majority of institutions recruit to art and design using both Route B and Route A, but find it hard to present reasons, when applicants ask whether they would do better to apply through one route rather than the other. While as a consequence of the proposed changes some selecting institutions may face larger numbers and the need to pre-filter, this is a problem solved in other subjects and the view taken is that overall applicant benefit should be a priority provided other system changes can mitigate that possible consequence.

Probable Consequence on 1:

Support for this proposal will mean that Route B as presently configured will cease and there can be one code for each course and one system which covers all applicants including those for art and design. Applications will be available to institutions as soon as they are received. If the proposal is rejected the previous majority consultation outcome will hold and institutions will be required to locate art and design courses in either Route A or Route B but not both; this might mean minor reduction of current confusion for applicants.

2. Art and Design as a subject group

Applications for Art and Design courses should be processed alongside other subjects within a single admissions system; it is not possible or appropriate to segregate this group.

Please tick one

Agree

Disagree

If you Disagree – then should the Art and Design subject group be defined by UCAS & HESA and courses allocated accordingly?

Please tick one

Yes

No

If you Disagree – then should the Art and Design subject group be defined by the institution classifying the courses it offers and informing UCAS accordingly?

Please tick one

Yes

No

Rationale for proposal 2:

The majority of practitioners already consulted have taken the view that with the range of developments

over the past few years, it is now no longer possible to set an outer boundary or to define Art and Design as subject grouping, as was once possible, and thereby to segregate Art and Design courses for the purpose of admissions. The confusion for applicants which is present in the Route A and B process has also been made worse when the same course title has been classed differently by institutions as being inside or outside their view of the "Art & Design" boundary. In the discussions there was no appetite for a centrally driven classification of courses in art and design which could then be used to control the timing or expectation of interviewing etc. With the range of course developments that have taken place there was also an increasing sense that there were no longer valid reasons why this subject area should be considered different to others, save that there were some particular admissions processing features which needed continued support; albeit that some of those features were not unique to Art & Design.

Probable Consequence on 2:

If this proposal is supported applications to all subjects will be treated in the same way within a single admissions system and the now difficult to define term "Art and Design" would not be used to segment courses for particular treatment during admissions processing.

If the proposal is not supported then further work will be needed for a sufficiently robust definition. If this could be found it may provide a way of segmenting and creating a parallel but different admissions process for courses in that group. This would, however, have the risk of replicating the "two routes" confusion and require ongoing guidance and advice especially if it related to differentiated dates, for example, where one games design course in institution X may have a different closing date than another at institution Y as at present.

3. Provision of direct evidence - in person and/or through material evidence

Where the institution criteria clearly indicates that consideration for a course requires more than the reviewing of an application form, and includes "material evidence" eg an interview, evidence of work in the form of a portfolio/tape etc, an audition or other mechanism (whether or not these elements are mandatory) there should be facilities to improve the application process and communications with applicants.

Please tick one

Agree

Disagree

Rationale for proposal 3:

The distinctive feature of the application process for the majority of Art & Design courses is recognised as being the use of visual evidence and/or face to face conversation. It is considered that in the proposed process there should be clearer acknowledgement of these factors and that support for tracking and process could be of benefit. The move to electronic processing has given opportunities for information exchange and the provision of additional information to applicants about the way an application will be processed is seen to be a way to support fairer admissions. Making clear as applicants apply online that they may be called to interview (there being no obligation on any course to interview everyone) – what might need to be prepared or presented by way of evidence of suitability is considered to be important. It was considered that there would be real benefit in the provision of such information with other options for further support and refinements being added incrementally to a basic structure over time.

Probable Consequence on 3:

If supported there would be a need for additional data input and software changes required in UCAS and in institutions. It would be a facility usable by all other UCAS courses, including, for example, performing arts or teacher education or nursing/other health related courses.

If not supported the opportunity would be lost to provide applicants for art and design with clearer information about the admission process through which their application would be considered and build on past useful practices.

4. Closing date (for on-time applications to be changed)

The current deadlines for applications to art and design courses of 15 January (Route A) or 24 March (Route B) should move to one common date to be same for all* subjects. Views are sought on the most suitable compromise date and recognising academic arguments for changing which suggest 15 February provided a good balance of opportunity, but acknowledging the recent commitment to 15 January in an earlier consultation. This issue has a consequence for all* other subjects in creating a single system (not just Art & Design) noting that the date for *Oxbridge & Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Sciences would remain as 15 October.	
Rank Preference	(Please mark in order 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th , 5 th to show your preference for the options below)
	Change supported with 15 February closing date for *all
1st	Change supported but retain 15 January closing date for *all
	Change supported but retain 24 March closing date for *all
	Change rejected – current closing dates in March & January should be retained
	Change supported but a different common date (? Late January) should be identified

Rationale for proposal 4:

In order to converge to a single system detailed consideration was given to possible closing dates and the view was taken that one single date was necessary, rather than continuing the confusion of multiple dates. The suggested date would still allow justifiable decision time for applicants where a later date had been used in the past, including those working on Foundation Studies as their entry qualification. A later date would give applicants more time post Christmas for advice and decision-making on which course to pick. It could also be important as the new 14-19 Diplomas come forward including the extended project to provide evidence of work. It was also clear that some prospective students would be ready to present evidence of their work soon after applying, whereas others needed much longer into their course, especially through Foundation Studies, to clarify the best direction for their undergraduate study. Other subject areas were also considered and the tightness of time in the current Route A 15 Jan deadline and it was considered that it would be justifiable for there to be longer for all, not just art and design applicants, to make their minds up on which the courses to choose.

Probable Consequence on 4:

Support for this proposed change would provide a common date for all art and design applicants to make an informed decision on course choices through a single applications system. If a common date is supported but not the move to a later timing, there would be pressure on those providing entry qualifications to further support applicant decision-making and this could perhaps increase the risk of drop out due to poor initial choices. If other dates for comprise were seen as more appropriate they could be adopted in order to achieve a common date. If a late date was chosen there could be more difficulty in ensuring equal consideration over the longer period.

If the proposed change is rejected in favour of differential dates for art and design subject areas there would need to be reliance on successful agreement on a definition of those areas which may be hard to achieve.

5. Full and Closed categories

A facility should be put in place to enable institutions to indicate when a course is full or temporarily closed to applicants (following closing date for applications).

Please tick one

Agree

Disagree

Rationale for proposal 5:

In Route B there has always been the facility to close a course after the on-time closing date. Those in that position applying late through Route A are presently advised to phone check before making a choice in

case there are no places left. This facility is fairer and transparent to applicants – this stops them wasting a choice as they would not be able to make an application to a closed course. Courses could be re-opened at any time – eg if the position altered due to withdrawals or additional ASNs. This facility would also help with the management of the work load for selecting courses. This would be a new facility for use in Route A that was available within Route B

Probable Consequence on 5:

If supported this facility would reduce the number of applications to selecting courses where there is a potential issue with volumes of applications. This facility would also provide applicants with a clear picture of what courses are available for them to apply for if they are applying after the on-time closing date.

If this proposal is not supported or is seen as unnecessary, no action is needed.

6. Provision of direct evidence – supplementary questions

The Delivery Partnership, its Art and Design Working Group and the February practitioner group meetings debated possible ways to support the process and improve information to all applicants on what they might be expected to produce, without intruding on the detail of different practices conducted by institutions. The flexibility for the institutions to make their own arrangements for interviewing and scrutiny of evidence was recognised as fundamental (given different practice across subjects), as were the benefits for applicants in understanding this better and becoming more involved. The following suggestions for new features are therefore proposed and views sought.

Within a revised single system there should be:

(Please respond to each question – tick either YES or NO to show your preference)

6.1 A course flag in the UCAS system for institutions to alert applicants that interviewing is used as part of the decision-making for applicants on that course.

Please tick one
YES

NO

6.2 A course flag in the UCAS system for institutions to alert applicants that material evidence such as portfolios or similar is used as part of the decision-making for applicants on that course.

Please tick one
YES

NO

6.3 Entry Profiles can already accommodate information about the admissions decision making process and all HEIs are encouraged to give such details for all their courses. Does your institution think it would be helpful if an additional box be added to Entry Profiles for you to enter details about:

a) Your interview process

YES

NO

b) Your portfolio/other evidence based process

YES

NO

6.4 Applicants to be enabled to indicate when they will be “ready” to present a portfolio or other required evidence within defined time blocks permitting a distinction between a guidance and recruiting period (eg Autumn) and a selecting period (eg Spring/Summer).

Please tick one
YES

NO

Defined time blocks to be:

a) Two in total: one in late spring and one in early summer.

YES

NO

b) Three in total: one pre Christmas, one in late spring and one in early summer.	YES	NO ✓
c) Blocks to be specified by individual institutions.	YES ✓	NO
6.5 No restriction to be placed on time periods when interviewing should occur.		
Please tick one	YES ✓	NO

7. A New decision to be processed via UCAS

A new interview invitation transaction to be made available as an option linked to identified course codes via UCAS, which would display on the applicant's UCAS Track screen the date of the interview planned by the institution. Entering the actual date could be optional, could be changed if necessary and would remind applicants of their forthcoming interview. The applicant could be asked to respond and confirm commitment to attending on the date logged. If enough interest from institutions, there might be the chance to see what dates an applicant had already committed to.

Please tick one	YES ✓	NO
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Rationale for proposal 7:

The additional transactions would assist in the basic communication and tracking for applicants and courses when organising interviews. These would not seek to impose process on HEIs and further detail would be explored through UCAS Change mechanisms but this would permit greater visibility for the applicant and a way of increasing the chance they would turn up for an offered interview because they had put an acknowledging response back through the UCAS system and it was showing on their Track screen record.

Probable Consequence on 7:

If supported would give improvements to transparency and information flow without making too great an impact on the very many ways institutions choose to conduct their interview activities. By having a response via UCAS it may reduce the number of no shows that institutions experience.

If not supported by large numbers the option would be made available for those who wished to use it and would not be an expectation for those for who is was in appropriate or inconvenient.

8. Identification of the process

Sitting within a single admissions system, as viewed by the applicant, would it be useful for there to be a name for the part of the process which involves these processes using more evidence than is presented on the application form eg an interview, and/or consideration of a portfolio or other material evidence? Would such categorisation confuse rather than clarify?

Possible names considered were –	<i>Rank Preference (Please mark in order e.g. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th to show your preference and/or propose other name)</i>
Portfolio plus:	
Interview plus:	
Material evidence:	
Pre-qualification evidence:	
Application plus:	

No new name needed:	1st
Other possible name	

Rationale for proposal 8:

In order to set aside the uninformative names of Route A and Route B it seemed to the practitioners consulted that a name for the revised process would be helpful particularly one which was suitably descriptive and readily understandable to applicants and staff in institutions.

Probable Consequence on 8:

If there is support for a name that makes sense to the admissions system users, a preferred name will be adopted and can be used by other subject areas. If it is felt this would confuse no action will be taken.

9. Other comments

Please indicate below any further ideas, comments or suggestions.

Please also use this box to explain as necessary responses to other questions above.

In the absence of any guidance as to how the preferences expressed in response to Q4 are to be used we have opted only to indicate our first preference.

Our positive responses to Q6.1 and Q6.2 must be qualified by a comment that much depends on what is meant by “flag”. Certainly, our experience is that the current method by which UCAS flags the existence of Entry Profiles or courses in UCAS Extra can be misinterpreted by applicants.

Our negative responses to Q6.3 are not because we believe that institutions should not provide this information but because we believe that there is already more than adequate opportunity to provide details within Entry Profiles. Institutions should also, of course, highlight these forms of assessment in their own publicity.

Although we have answered “yes” to Q7, we would have very grave reservations about the option suggested that other institutions could see which interview dates an applicant had committed to as this would potentially undermine the rule of invisibility.

With respect to Q8 we feel that any new name would simply cause confusion.

Please return to Hazel Flynn, GuildHE – hazel.flynn@guildhe.ac.uk by 5.00 pm on 21 May 2008 at the latest

Appendix 1 Explanation of Fundamental changes

1 Sequential processing

1.1 The first fundamental change is the setting aside of the process of sequential consideration of applications. Art and Design subjects are alone, at undergraduate level, in having a sequential process of consideration for applicants. Despite a number of discussions and recent exploration with practitioners it has proved very difficult to establish an academic rationale as to why these subjects should use such a different process and very few which demonstrate ways it might benefit the applicant.

1.2 There is an argument that points out that an applicant having made a first choice and succeeded then incurs no further costs and knows where they stand as does the institution. On the other hand there appear to be many ways in which such a sequential process disadvantages the applicant. It restricts choice and opportunity to be considered by, and explore possibilities with, a number of institutions. There is a requirement for a more sophisticated understanding of patterns of course popularity and perceived hierarchy, which throws reliance on effective information and guidance from staff teaching the respective entry qualifications. Applicants have to understand the higher education world, in order to rank and define choices to their best advantage. Those who fail to meet the criteria for their sequential offer have no insurance offer from the sequential choices they made. The main argument for retention relates to the academic and administrative management of large numbers of applications to popular courses and the impact on hard pressed academic staff who may need to deal as a result with a larger number of applicants in a multi choice position.

1.3 There are particular issues in the relation to the Scottish Art & Design specialist institutions and schools within universities which should be understood. During most of the 1990s and until only 5 or so years ago there was a separate admissions system for Art & Design courses operating in Scotland. The institutions joined UCAS using the Route B alone for most of their Art & Design courses and Route A for Architecture. Within the Scottish structures there are in effect two entry points where sequential Route B was used; year 1 - for those with Scottish Highers entering the first year and doing in effect a more open diagnostic year similar to a Foundation Studies course followed by 3 years of more specialist work; year 2 – for those knowing which specialism they wanted to follow who were often applicants from other parts of the UK entering after completing Foundation Studies elsewhere. The Scottish community includes some of the most selecting institutions and courses so Route B sequential has permitted some control mechanism, and for Year 1 applicants, the application is more for the institution rather than area of arts practice.

1.4 Given such a change, other features of a revised process would need to find ways of seeking simplicity while finding way of mitigating the negative effect of such a radical change for those courses that have high numbers of applicants and may be predicted to have more as a consequence. This is the most important step to simplify the processes as expected by Recommendation 16.

1.5 The DP recommends that there should be no sequential processing in the revised process.

2 Special treatment for application purposes because of being an Art and Design subject

2.1 The second fundamental change is that the revised process is available to all courses and subjects that wish to use it. In this regard there is then no special application mechanism that only courses in a particular subject area are expected to use (save for Oxbridge and Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Sciences closing dates). This fulfils the Recommendation 16 expectation of a single system and recognises the conclusion (see 6.1 below) that making an absolute segregation of courses as “Art and Design” is no longer feasible nor appropriate.

2.2 The DP recommends that Art and Design should not be treated as a “segregated group” in terms of its admissions process. This has a consequence for all other subjects in creating a single system.

3 Processes to support provision of material evidence

The third fundamental change is the addition to the UCAS system and local data processing of facilities to make visible the process of evidence gathering as part of the application process. In making a judgement on the suitability of the applicant for a course, especially for the range of Art & Design programmes, physical materials presented as portfolios are considered and an opportunity is taken to interview and talk to applicants about their work. Ensuring there is the opportunity for admissions staff to look at evidence of materials and performance is considered a fundamental feature of admissions to the range of Art & Design programmes. It is noted that these subjects are not alone in using this direct evidence in coming to judgements on applicant suitability. At a basic level this change seeks to make visible expectations on applicants and put in place a simple mechanism for tracking. There is the assumption that alongside the summary data processing in the system, there will be adequate advice and guidance on the material to be presented, the criteria to be applied and the mechanisms used for scrutiny. This information should be available within the entry profiles and through HEI/FECs prospectuses and web sites. Recommendation 16 does not rely on this change but without it, the important improvement to communication and therefore fairer admission would be difficult to achieve.

The DP recommends that there should be basic provision for information and tracking in relation to the provision of material evidence as part of the admissions process.

4 Change to the applications “closing” date

The fourth fundamental change is to move the closing date for the receipt of applications to a common closing date. This is designed to help the applicant. There was a suggestion that this should be 15 February and there are views on the desirability of earlier dates and arguments for the retention of 15 January. The views on desirability of later March dates were set aside – see 6.4 below. There was a clear view that to compel the large numbers of students currently taking advantage of a March closing date to move so much earlier would be to their disadvantage. This change is designed to recognise that for a number applicants (not just in Art & Design) their practices may not be at a stage of development, earlier in the admissions cycle, for them to make an adequately informed judgement about the topic they want to take up in higher education. For selecting institutions this could allow a more focussed interviewing period late in the cycle; although this might be an issue for Scotland due to the diagnostic form of the first year. There are fundamental implications for other subject areas from this proposal and for the guarantees of equal consideration for applications received prior to the closing date. However it is considered this may provide important additional flexibility for a wide range of applicants and scope for better guidance. There are arguments that support 15 January given it was recently changed and there could be further possible bunching of electronic applications near to closing date. The summer 2007 consultation gave support for the 15 January position. There are also arguments from the school perspective which suggest current timing in mid January is an unhelpful clash with assessments. In taking a view on the most suitable date for the simplification and single system a later date would still allow earlier applications to be processed on arrival. It is important also to recognise that the educational and guidance processes already within the Foundation Studies courses and expected to arise within the new 14-19 diplomas would benefit from later decision-making and later interviewing.

The DP recommends that the closing date for all courses currently having closing date of 15 January or 26 March should move to ONE DATE

The DP seeks views on the most suitable compromise date and it recognises the arguments for changing again to a compromise date possibly 15 February but acknowledges the relatively recent consultation confirming 15 January. This consideration has a consequence for all other subjects in creating a single system noting that Oxbridge and Medicine Dentistry & Veterinary Sciences dates would remain at 15 October.

5 Consequences of the fundamental changes

5.1 The consequences of applying all the proposed fundamental changes is that the concept of Route A and Route B for courses is redundant. There would be one set of closing dates, one set of course codes (rather than 2), new data to be added describing the course entry process and criteria used in making judgement on applicants, greater applicant input on indicating when they were ready

to be subject to scrutiny and more information for admissions staff to use in planning the recruitment processes. What is also clear, if change occurs along the lines proposed, is that, larger numbers of applications might have to be processed for some courses, and some institutions and courses will need to consider new ways to filter applicants before the interview stage.

5.2 Most significantly for both staff and applicants the proposal will make more the application process simpler to explain and more straightforward. By embedding in the new process some of the Route B principles

- about time for applicant decision-making,
- the adherence to evidence based decision-making through scrutiny of applicant materials in portfolio (plus) and interview, and
- by recognising the dynamism of the subject areas;

it is hoped the benefits currently gained by the vast bulk of educational providers who chose to take advantage of offer Routes A and B for the same course, will be secured.

5.3 Given the changes being undertaken it was also proposed to include a mechanism for declaring a course full or closed.

The DP recommends that the current terminology and processes labelled Route A and Route B be set aside; the principle of one single course code per course be used; facilities be put in place for declaring a course full or temporarily closed to applicants.

6. Possibilities that were set aside including ways of mitigating the impact of the loss of a sequential route

6.1 Arrangements centred on Arts & Design subjects

Early on in the first consultation it was clear that being able, these days, to set a clear boundary around what programmes are Art and Design was very challenging. While the task set through recommendation 16 is focussed on the admission to Art & Design subjects, it was soon clear that there was the potential for a solution which could also service the needs of other subjects as well. It was also clear from the data that in their choices applicants were not themselves restricting their choices to a set of courses only within a notional Art & Design subject range. If from a subject dynamic and development perspective, it was difficult to make such a classification, it was also unclear who should take responsibility for the classification. If centrally driven it could be seen as bureaucratic from an institutional view, if locally, chaotic from an applicants view. In either case it would be impossible to achieve a level of consistency that would assist in making the systems easier and simpler. There was every likelihood that, for subjects such as games design or product design, similar courses even in the same institution would find themselves in different classification systems. If such categorizations were then used to drive fundamental structures with the admissions process another level of confusion could be introduced.

The DP agreed that, whatever other change was put in place, it should not rely on using a definition of “Art & Design” courses.

6.2 Expressing a preference

Various possible ways forward to mitigate the impact on selecting institutions/courses have been looked into. The current process allows the applicant to rank their choices and a way of retaining that feature, through offering applicants a chance to flag one or two of their five choices as first/second or equal first choice was explored. It was thought this might allow selecting courses a way of filtering those who were genuinely interested. If this was taken forward it would rely either on being able to segregate the group of Art & Design courses definitively or reverting to make this an option for all courses. It would also have the same need for sophisticated information and guidance and equal scope for confusion as the systems it was design to replace. Both from an equality perspective re widening participation and comparability with practices for undergraduate admissions in other subjects, after debate adequate rationale for including an initial declaration of preference could not be found. This preference solution was therefore rejected as a retrograde step in relation to all courses and not possible if it was to be through subject restrictions due to the inability to securely segregate the courses. If a grouping of those using material evidence could be segregated

it was also not clear why they should then be using a preferential mechanism compared to any other course chosen.

The DP agreed that, whatever other change was put in place, it should not include expression of preference at the pre offer stages.

6.3 Further Restriction on course choice to 3 or 4

The Delivery Partnership considered that to move forward with a single system for all there would need to be some adaptation of the current Route A process, particularly to accommodate the consequences of moving away from Route B sequential processing. The consideration of all applicants concurrently was likely to have an outcome of more applications having to be processed by institutions; with especial burden to be carried by popular courses. While such an expansion of choice and simplification of the process would benefit applicants, it could mean more work for some staff within institutions. Serious consideration was given by the Art & Design Working Group to reducing the number of choices from 5 to 4 or even from 5 to 3 because it was thought that by this means some of those negative effects could be counteracted. ADWG proposed this response to reduce the impact on the selecting courses (affected by the loss of Route B) of the numbers of applications they may need to process. They also thought that if applicants were given longer to consolidate their choices and make an informed and well advised decision on which courses to place on their application they may not need the flexibility of 5 choices. The option of 3 choices was only feasible if there was a way to set a boundary around Art & Design courses and that had been rejected. Viewing the system as a whole and the organisational pressure on providers, inevitably at present 4 of the 5 institutions will have undertaken considerable work in application processing to no benefit to their institution. Given that the current average number of application choices is around 4.4 there would not be significant disadvantage to applicants, especially as in combination with 4 above, they would have longer to visit institutions and consider their choices prior to confirming their initial application. Exploring this proposal within the overarching context of the DPSG there were concerns about the scale of impact of this possible change. While some supported a reduction for many there were concerns because it had only recently been cut back from 6 and the impact of that change was not yet clear. Others argued that when the proposal from the Wilson group had suggested a reduction to 4, and the compromise of 5 choices had been adopted, assurances had been given that this would not merely be a path to further reductions. In that context it could be seen as bad faith to consult again on this area so soon. Not all were convinced that there would in fact be benefit to those with selecting courses by such a reduction. There were also arguments put that, if the focus was on the applicant's interests, it was retrograde to reduce course choice.

The DP agreed that, whatever other change was put in place, the number of courses applicants could apply for should be retained at 5.

6.4 Timing of closing date – other later options

Suggestions were made that the closing date should be different for Art and Design courses compared to other courses which had a closing date of 15 January. There were views against moving the whole system to a March closing date prior to which all applicants would be given equal consideration – it would be too problematic to achieve and would compress too tightly the consideration time if applied to all courses. The possibility of a specific closing date for Art & Design courses was also set aside for the same reasons given in 6.1 above about the feasibility and desirability of segregating the subject for admissions purposes. A mid February date was seen as a reasonable proposal by many, giving time for more informed decision-making by the applicant. There were however concerns that with a change from December relatively recently having been implemented to change again would be troublesome. For many the idea of simplification and single system with one date applying to all was attractive while allowing earlier applications to be processed on arrival provided common criteria were able to be used to ensure equity.

The DP agreed that, whatever other change was put in place, it should provide for adequate time for applicant decision making and should not retain the confusion of multiple closing dates

6.5 Sophistication of facilities for tracking interview/portfolio processing

A number of useful suggestions were made about mechanisms to manage the interviewing process; dealing with difficulties of applicants who did not turn up having been invited; ways of timing

interviews; methods of portfolio scrutiny. Many different processes relied on different arrangements for admission administration either being centralised or devolved. There was interest in being able to define as part of the data provided for UCAS record the form of interviewing operated by the course concerned. To give applicants clear parameters and possibly the range of times used. While there could be further possibility for deeper definition and support mechanisms given the time scales and complexity it did not seem feasible to do other than take a basic position for the 2010 timescales. Others argued that the freedom on action within institutions should not be constrained by too great a level of detailed processing being undertaken in a standardised way through the UCAS system. There were also proposals that application forms should be held until an agreed date - ? 31 January and a constraint placed on early interviewing of applicants outside of an agreed interview period. Some looked to UCAS to define the interview periods. Others were committed to a more open system where applications were considered at any time. It was suggested that unless there were "rules" on timing from UCAS it would be difficult to get colleagues to behave in the same way.

The DP agreed therefore, that whatever other change was put in place, it should not attempt to secure too complex an initial range of support for the material evidence processes.

6.6 Change for change sake

There was a view which argued that the current processes work well and particularly for those solely using Route B so no change was needed. This was not shared by the majority who were using both Route A and Route B and who believed the process was unhelpfully confusing for the range of applicants they wished to attract. There was equally a concern that changes now would be undertaken only to find in two or three years time that all was overturned by the implementation of a form of PQA process. Assurance was given that the Delivery Partnership would be looking at the likely shape of further changes to applications process potentially to be introduced in the future, in order to ensure that the current changes could be a building block towards a future process should that be taken forward. Given general agreement on the current confusion, it was not fair to applicants to continue with the present mechanism when radical and helpful changes could be made now.

The DP agreed that there were sufficient disadvantages to the current multiple processing system that change should take place now.

Appendix 2 COMMENTARY and DATA PAPER

1. Introduction & Context

1.1 The Delivery Partnership (DPSG) through its Art & Design Working Group, has been looking into how to implement the recommendation 16 of the Wilson report. This stated we should be –

Simplifying arrangements for Art and Design

The two-route application system for Art and Design to be replaced by a single admissions system, which retains sequential applications and an opening date for applications at the beginning of September and a closing date in late March.

Government response

Recommend that this proposal be implemented by DP in collaboration with the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design, matching the number of applications to the mainstream applications process and with regard to the potential need for a later closing date of March due to the preparation of portfolio work.

1.2 The DPSG asked the Art & Design Working Group (ADWG), led by Professor David Vaughan who is also the Vice Chairman of the Delivery Partnership itself, to analyse the options further to see if a better solution can be found. The ADWG has been looking for major changes to the current system to make it easier for applicants and give a more seamless connection for applicants between their range of applications in Art & Design and other subjects in order to make a genuinely “single admissions system”. It also wants to keep secure and improve the opportunities to widen participation; focussing more explicitly making processes simpler for the applicants.

1.3 To understand the current admission processes in Art & Design better a number of analyses were undertaken using the 2006 and 2007 UCAS applicant data set. These were chosen to test certain expectations, anecdotal views or commonly held perceptions. They were also based on the questions which had been raised by the responses in the summer consultation. Noted below is some commentary on various aspects of admission to Art & Design courses and a summary of some of the data. In order to fully appreciate the proposals for consideration it is important to be reminded of the context for recommendation 16:

- Prior to 1996 nearly all applications for Art and Design courses (with the exception of some offered by pre-1992 universities) were made through the Art and Design Admissions Registry (ADAR), which had undertaken this role for over two decades;
- ADAR merged into UCAS and in 1996 Route B was established continuing the pattern of a March closing date for applications, and first, second and third choice sequential portfolio interviews;
- Until that time and for some time afterwards it was relatively straight forward to define what was understood to be an Art and/or Design course (particularly since this was largely based on the definitions used by the CNAAs up to 1992);
- From its inception the majority of Art and Design courses continued to recruit through Route B only;
- Over time the range of course developments has become much more diverse (often involving new media and new subject approaches and combinations) and so it has now become almost impossible to define the subject area as previously;

At the same time more and more courses now recruit through both Route A and Route B, with a few recruiting through one or the other and overall the balance of entry into traditional Art and Design courses is now slightly greater through Route A. However the fundamentals remain of an interview with evidence (portfolio/audition/other) and with many applicants undertaking a diagnostic preparatory qualification in addition to or instead of ‘A’ levels.

2. Myths and Perceptions – “Did you know that....?”

2.1 *Most applications for Art & Design courses are processed via Route B*

In fact there are now more applications through Route A. Looking at the pattern of applications through UCAS in 2006 and 2007 a slowly increasing percentage of applications are in Route A compared to Route B. With about half the applicants being processed via each Route, there were 52% in 2006, rising to 54% in 2007 of applications in Route A compared to 48% and then 46% in Route B.

2.2 *Most Art & Design courses recruit through Route B only*

In fact the vast majority of Art & Design courses recruit through both Route A and Route B. Looking at the pattern of courses offering entry through UCAS in 2006 and 2007, 65.2% rising to 67.3% of courses offered an entry via both Routes and there were a reducing number 14.5% to 12% where courses were only able to

be entered via Route B. Of those some were in courses with very high applicant to places ratios while a number were Foundation Degree top up. Fashion was the subject most offered solely through Route B.

2.3 *Art and Design Courses are a group that can be separately define and have separate admissions needs from other subjects*

The Art & Design Working Group has used a working definition of what constitutes an Art & Design Course basing it on the set of UCAS codes in order to gather the data sets – there were over 1500 different award titles in this data set. It was evident from the consultation last year that most institutions were uneasy with some central definition being used and saw the designation of courses and subject areas as part of their own academic responsibilities. It was also increasingly the case that previously clear boundaries have been made much more permeable as new subjects and new arts practices are developed – eg BA Computer Gaming, BA Digital Media Production. The creative environment in particular would be damaged by some form of national classification processes that sought to box off a status quo.

The responses from institutions and information on practice shows that while some courses are moving away from interview or seeing portfolios on grounds of organisational costs, various combinations of these mechanisms are used by Art & Design courses because it is considered an important part of the judgement to understand student interest, motivation and capacity to communicate as well as to see and discuss the “physical” evidence of their work. Even if “grades” are part of a conditional offer, the selection process involves academic and artistic judgement directly on the potential of the student as an arts practitioner, as demonstrated by material they are producing. In this way subjects in the creative industries can be seen as having particular admissions needs, however, this position can also be argued by other subjects such as teaching, and health professions which too place reliance on interview processes.

2.4 *Only combined courses recruit through Route A*

Over 20% of courses only recruit through Route A mainly in the Pre 1992 Universities including UCL’s Slade School of Art and 67% of Art & Design courses in 2007 provided an entry mechanism through both Route A and Route B. It was evident therefore that the more traditional courses such as Fine Arts, Graphic Design, etc are also choosing to offer applicants the choice of which route they want to channel their application. However there has been very little material in either entry profiles or student guidance to confirm the reasons why an applicant should take up one application route compared to the other. What is clear is that if twins with the same entry characteristics applied for the same courses using the two different routes, their choices and outcome position would be somewhat different – Insurance offer or not; opportunity to be considered by their all chosen institutions; opportunity to express a preference, timing of interviews and closing dates. There is evidence that some students are sufficiently confused by the duplication that they apply for the same course using a Route A and a Route B choice (1721 in 2006).

2.5 *Most Specialist HEIs recruit through Route B*

In 2006 there were two specialist HEIs in Scotland that recruited solely through Route B, and one university recruited its Art & Design courses through Route B only. In addition 12 FE Colleges only used Route B for entry to Art & Design programmes and none of these were the specialist FECs in Art & Design. The largest specialist HEI recruited 44 courses via Route B only but also had 28 courses where entry could be through Route A or Route B and 4 which were just through Route A. Some Schools of Art which are “nested” within larger universities in England just recruited via Route A and there were 17 universities recruiting to their Art & Design courses just via Route A.

2.6 *The most popular courses are closed after Route B round 1*

There were no courses in Route B that were closed early to applicants last year. That said it is also the case that the proportion of applicants gaining a place in Round 1 of Route B is very high at about 45% each year, compared to numbers from the following two Rounds at 7% and 5% in 2006 and 8% and 2% in 2007. The ratio of applications to those accepting was reasonably constant across 2006 and 2007 but again demonstrated the greater difficulty of securing places in later rounds, a position worsening in 2007 when Round 1 was 1:2.5; Round 2 was 1:8.3 and Round 3 was 1:22.

2.7 *Route B applicants don’t apply until later*

UCAS have looked at the pattern of applications from those declaring a choice through Route B. Noting that in 2006 there were about 67,000 Route B choices, and as at November 2007 there were 1,672 applicants and 2,556 courses choices in Route B resting on the UCAS system awaiting for the March deadline. By 15 January there were also 13,586 applicants who had made over 22,000 course choices which might have been able to be referred to the institutions. Over 30% therefore of current Route B applicants had decided well before March on their preferred subjects of study and institutions could have begun to consider their applications.

Appendix 2 Continued

2.8 *Applicants need extra guidance about Route A and Route B choices from HEI, FEC and School staff*
There is evidence that some students are sufficiently confused that they apply for the same course using a Route A and a Route B choice. In 2006 there were 1721 applicants in that position – these eventually turned into 458 acceptances into Route A courses, 29 acceptances into Route B courses.

2.9 *All Route B applicants are interviewed*

Even when applicants were processed in the previous ADAR system there have been courses that have not used interview processes. Presently there are some selecting HEIs that have chosen not to interview and there are cases where only portfolios are considered.

2.10 *All Foundation Studies applicants apply via Route B*

The Route B has a structure geared to receiving Foundation Studies (ie 1 yr Pre University course) but those students also use Route A as in 2007. From UCAS data it appears that there were more offers in Route A than in Route B where the condition set an expectation of a pass in Foundation Studies.

3. Contextual Data

3.1 The tables and charts below show the balance of applications through the different routes and nos who eventually accepted a place through these different entry processes.

2006	Applications	Acceptances	Ratio	% of total acceptances
Route A	69,069	11,872	1: 5.8	43.5%
Route B 1	32,377	12,160	1: 2.6	44.6%
Route B 2	19,091	1,891	1: 10	6.9%
Route B 3	11,902	1,362	1: 8.7	5.0%
Route B total	63,370	15,413	1: 4.1	56.4%
A&B Total	132,439	27,285	1: 4.8	

2007	Applications	Acceptances	Ratio	% of total acceptances
Route A	78,681	13,494	1: 5.8	45%
Route B 1	34,812	13,500	1: 2.5	45%
Route B 2	20,224	2,430	1: 8.3	8.1%
Route B 3	12,373	557	1: 22.2	1.85%
Route B total	67,409	16,487	1: 4	55%
A&B Total	146,090	29,981	1: 4.8	

3.2 The table below shows the entry route where HEIs/FECs have chosen to place their courses.

2006	Courses with applications in	HEIs/FECs with applications in	2007	Courses with applications in
Route A only	372	27	Route A only	395
Route B only	265	15	Route B only	228
Routes A & B	1192	136	Routes A & B	1284
	1829	178		1907

4. Interest in change

When the Summer 2007 consultation asked whether institutions would be prepared to opt and place their course in one Route for simplicity over 70% across HE, FE and schools supported a change but the minimal alteration it was recognised would not address the fundamental confusions.

Appendix 3

SINGLE CONSOLIDATED ADMISSIONS PROCESS INCLUDING ALL ART AND DESIGN PROGRAMMES

This description assumes all the proposals subject to consultation response in Annex 1 are accepted. The creation of a single system will be adapted * according to the range of responses.

2.1 School College Applicant view

They can apply from June but most commence in September

They can pick 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 courses and have until the closing date (?15 February ? January date) to submit their application and receive “equal consideration”.

In making their choice they can see the minimum criteria they need to meet on the entry profiles
They can see on the Unistats website how much competition there is for a place on their chosen course.
Where there is high competition for course places, the entry profiles also show what applicants will need to do to show themselves to their best advantage.

In the entry profiles and/or on the course websites there is information and guidance about evidence gathering processes such as interview processes; use of portfolios including e-portfolios and other forms of evidence of work to be used as part of the selection/recruitment process.

When completing the electronic application a short summary of these activities, based on the entry profile material, appears when an application is made to a course using such processes.

On the electronic application applicants show the main entry qualification they are presenting – eg A levels, Foundation, 14-19 Diploma,
Applicants can indicate a preference for timing of scrutiny or indicate no preference.

Communication takes place between the institution/course and the applicant about how evidence is presented for consideration including interviewing. The applicant can confirm their interview attendance and see dates concerned. The institution/course makes a decision on the applicant or the applicant makes a decision on the institution/course.

Applicant receives an offer of a place or a rejection as soon as decision is made and latest by 31 May.

Applicant can accept or reject the place preferably as soon as possible but at latest by 30 June.

Applicants can at any time approach institutions to discuss/ask for a change of course, but the Inst/Crses do not have to grant this change

Applicants can retain one firm and one insurance offer

Applicants can add choices up to 4 during period to 31 March; can apply after the closing date (? 15 February ? January date) but have no guarantee of “equal consideration”

Applicants who have no offers can enter UCAS Extra from 26 February.

Applicants get results and if they meet conditions, their place is confirmed

Applicants who do not meet the conditions of their offers can enter Clearing

Applicants who wish to change course having exceeded conditional offers can take up Adjustment

Applicants enrol as students

2.2 HEI / FE College, Course view

Each course accepting applicants has a course code according to subject classification. Institutions/courses can define their course as using the Material Evidence process and complete information in the Net update accordingly. There is a flag showing there is an interview process and a free text box to describe it. There is a flag showing provision of material evidence. A set of choices tick all or any for Hard copy Portfolio; Digital Portfolio; Sound material; Presentation/ Audition; Text; and Other.

The Inst/Crses provide detailed information in the entry profiles of the minimum criteria they expect from applicants and show what applicants will need to do to show themselves to their best advantage. In the entry profiles and/or on the course websites, the Inst/Crses provide information and guidance about evidence gathering processes such as interview processes; use of portfolios including e-portfolios and other forms of evidence of work, to be used as part of the selection/recruitment process.

The Inst/Crses provide a short summary for display to the applicant when an electronic application is made to a course flagged as using the Material Evidence processes.

The Inst/Crses can see on the Unistats website the ratio of applicants to places available on any course based on UCAS data from the previous year.

An application is received from a prospective student and immediately referred for consideration by the Inst/Crses.

All applications received by the initial closing date of (?15 February ? January date) are given equal consideration. That means that the criteria displayed in the entry profiles are used in making a decision on whether to offer a place. The numbers of places available are always a factor in deciding whether to offer a place.

After the closing date (?15 February ? January date) applications may still be received but equal consideration does not have to be given to 'late applications' so a reject decision can be applied.

For those courses using the Material Evidence process, admissions staff can view on line as part of TRACK, in summary the main entry qualification, applicants are presenting – eg A levels, Foundation, 14-19 Diploma, etc.

They can view the applicants' preference for timing of scrutiny of Material Evidence

There may be a national agreement on Spring only interview periods or on no restrictions.

Communication takes place between the Inst/Crses and the applicant about how evidence is presented for consideration, including interviewing. The Inst/Crses could confirm an interview arrangement and see applicant confirmation of attendance. The Inst/Crses make a decision on the applicant or the applicant makes a decision on the institution/course. Applicants can at any time approach institutions to discuss/ask for a change of course, but the Inst/Crses do not have to grant this change

The Inst/Crses issue an offer of a place or a rejection by 31 March if possible or at latest by 30 May. They define the conditions of that offer.

Applicants can accept or reject the place by 30 June. The Inst/Crses know whether the applicant has chosen them as firm or as insurance choice and communicates entry information as appropriate.

The Inst/Crses decide after the closing date (?15 February ? January date) to

- a) declare a course "full" – no further applications considered until clearing
- b) declare a course "presently closed" – no further applicants can be considered until those currently under consideration have been processed
- c) declare a course "presently closed to UK funded applicants" – only ELQ, international or applicants paying full cost fees can be considered until the group of applicants currently under consideration have been processed
- d) declare a course open

NOTE Option d) is default setting.

The Inst/Crses can decide whether the course can accept applicants from UCAS Extra or from Clearing using the above mechanism.

The Inst/Crses get early sight of results/or receive direct from applicant and if they meet conditions confirm their place or decide whether to accept or reject if conditions are not met

The Inst/Crses can enter Clearing after 30 June and will receive notification if an applicant wishes to go into Adjustment

Enrolment and institutional/course information sent to confirmed entrants eg residential info

Applicants enrol as students