

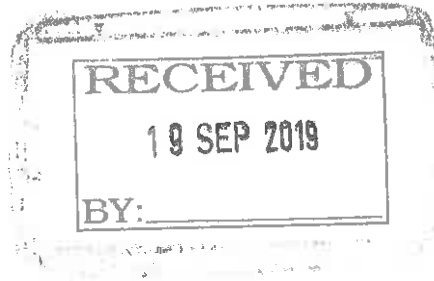
MTB

UCAS

UCAS Ref: CM/SC

19 September 2019

M T Burke
Assistant Coroner
West Yorkshire – Western
City Courts
The Tyrls
Bradford
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Chief Executive
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Dear M T Burke

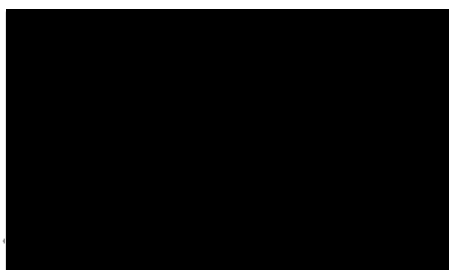
Thank you for sending a copy of the Regulation 28 report of 26 July 2019, concerning the inquest into the tragic death of Owen Williams on 16 August 2018.

In responding, I wanted to set out the actions that UCAS already takes to support students in the release of examination results and university decisions, as well as the future steps we are taking to address the issues you have highlighted.

UCAS is an independent charity, running the UK's national higher education admissions service. Every year, we help around 700,000 students apply for full-time undergraduate courses at nearly 400 UK universities and colleges. We are committed to ensuring that everyone who can benefit from higher education is able to do so – and to go on to succeed once they have started their course. We work in partnership with charities and other organisations to provide practical and inspiring information, advice and resources for under-represented groups, as well as producing reports to inform public debate. In particular, we seek to provide information on the options available to students throughout the process, including when a student has been unsuccessful in securing their preferred place.

Each year, UCAS and UK universities and colleges are given early access to A level results under strict embargo arrangements with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The embargo period covers the defined period of time where early access to embargoed examination results is given. This allows universities and colleges to prepare and make decisions by the official publication dates of exam results. During this time, neither UCAS nor universities are permitted to discuss results or the subsequent admission decisions (from which a result could be inferred) with students. This embargo is lifted by JCQ at 06:00 on the morning of A level results day, at which point students can receive their A level results. Many schools and colleges require students to collect their results in person, thus ensuring they are supported if they do not achieve the results they wanted; however, practice does vary across the sector.

UCAS Track is the online system students use to monitor their university offers and decisions. During the embargo period, Track is temporarily suspended and re-opens at 08:00 on the morning of A level results day. Whilst students are unable to access their A level results this way, they can see if they have been accepted by their chosen university, or whether they have entered Clearing.



UCAS IS THE TRADING NAME OF THE
UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
ADMISSIONS SERVICE.

REGISTERED IN ENGLAND AND
WALES: 2839815
(LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
REGISTERED CHARITY IN ENGLAND
AND WALES: 1024741 AND
SCOTLAND: SC038598
REGISTERED OFFICE AS ABOVE

Throughout the day, and in the lead up to results day, we send applicants email updates that include practical information and advice about what to expect, and what to do if their application has been unsuccessful. Our website, ucas.com, explains what happens on results day and gives advice on [preparing for results day \(www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/ucas-undergraduate-results\)](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/ucas-undergraduate-results), [what to do after you have received your exam results \(www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/results/after-you-get-your-exam-results\)](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/results/after-you-get-your-exam-results), and [Clearing \(www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/what-clearing\)](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/what-clearing). This year we signposted new resources from the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust for students who feel they need help looking after their wellbeing at this time. Most importantly, our Customer Experience Centre offers support via telephone and social media during the Confirmation and Clearing period, ensuring students have access to the right information and advice for their needs.


Please note that other Level 3 qualification results are subject to different embargo periods. For example, the results of Pearson BTEC qualifications (RQF) are released the day before A level results, although some centres do not provide these until A level results day. This means that, for students who have early access to these results, there is a long period of uncertainty.

On receipt of your letter, we contacted the Department for Education (DfE) and (JCQ) to discuss our own concerns about the time at which students can access their results without support from their school or college – and the inconsistency in approach. We believe improvements could be made to the process, and we are keen to work with DfE, JCQ, awarding organisations, schools, and colleges to improve the overall experience for students. In order to take this forward, we will jointly host a roundtable with DfE to explore how we can support students throughout the examination and results periods, particularly those who do not receive the grades they had hoped for.

At this roundtable, we will explore with JCQ, and a range of school and HE representatives, how we can achieve this, and protect students' wellbeing. In particular, we will explore:

- The creation and promotion of good practice amongst schools and colleges to facilitate a more consistent experience across different centres.
- Changing the time at which the embargo is lifted to ensure students are more able to readily access any support they may require from teachers, careers advisers, parents and carers.
- How we can continue to support students who may not have secured a place at their chosen higher education provider, and to ensure they are made aware of all the different choices available to them throughout the application process.

In addition, UCAS will seek to improve the information and advice provided to students at this time, to ensure consistency and reassurance about alternative options where appropriate. This roundtable will happen before the end of 2019 to ensure outcomes are implemented prior to the 2020 examination awarding period.



I hope this offers clarification on how UCAS has been working to support students through the application process, and how we are seeking to improve the connection between applicants and higher education providers in the future. We will update you on the outcome of the roundtable, and any future developments in due course.

Yours sincerely



Clare Marchant
Chief Executive