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UCAS Ref: CM/SN

UCAS

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Dear Graeme Irvine,

Thank you for sending a copy of the Regulation 28 report of 28 October 2019, concerning the inquest into the tragic death of Julius Little on 7 June 2019.

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 can 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 underrepresented groups, as well as producing reports to inform public debate.

As part of this commitment, we regularly review our products and services to ensure that they are fit for purpose. We have been reviewing the questions we currently ask applicants on the UCAS application, and considering how we can improve the flow of information between the student and the course provider. A key area we have been focusing on is the question that allows applicants to disclose a disability, learning difference, illness or mental health condition, acknowledging that there are changes we could make to facilitate disclosure and reassure students about how this information is used. However, the data collected by UCAS flows into the systems of nearly 400 universities and colleges across the UK, and into a range of other data collection exercises, such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record, so significant planning and engagement across the whole higher education sector is necessary to implement any changes – it isn't just a change to the UCAS application.

In order to initiate work on the question, we held a roundtable discussion in July 2019 with representatives from higher education sector bodies, expert organisations and course providers to understand the most appropriate and effective ways in which this question could be improved. Subsequently, we have drafted changes to the language of the question and the accompanying help text in response to the points raised, and we have just finished collating feedback on the first draft. We anticipate the improved version will be in place for

actions, which we will be now looking to take forward in the new year. Most significantly, Jcq (Joint Council for Qualifications) has agreed to move their A level results embargo to 8am to minimise the time gap between students receiving results and accessing support. Additionally, UCAS will be working collaboratively with Jcq, the Department for Education and other stakeholders to develop good practice for schools, colleges and HE providers to promote consistency in how results are communicated to students, and the support offered.

I hope this offers clarification on how UCAS has been working to collaboratively with experts and course providers to improve the applicant experience and support students with mental health concerns. We will update you on the details of the reviewed question and good practice once they are finalised, along with any future developments, in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare Marchant', written in a cursive style.

Clare Marchant
Chief Executive