ADVANCING ACCESS

24 leading universities working together with schools and colleges

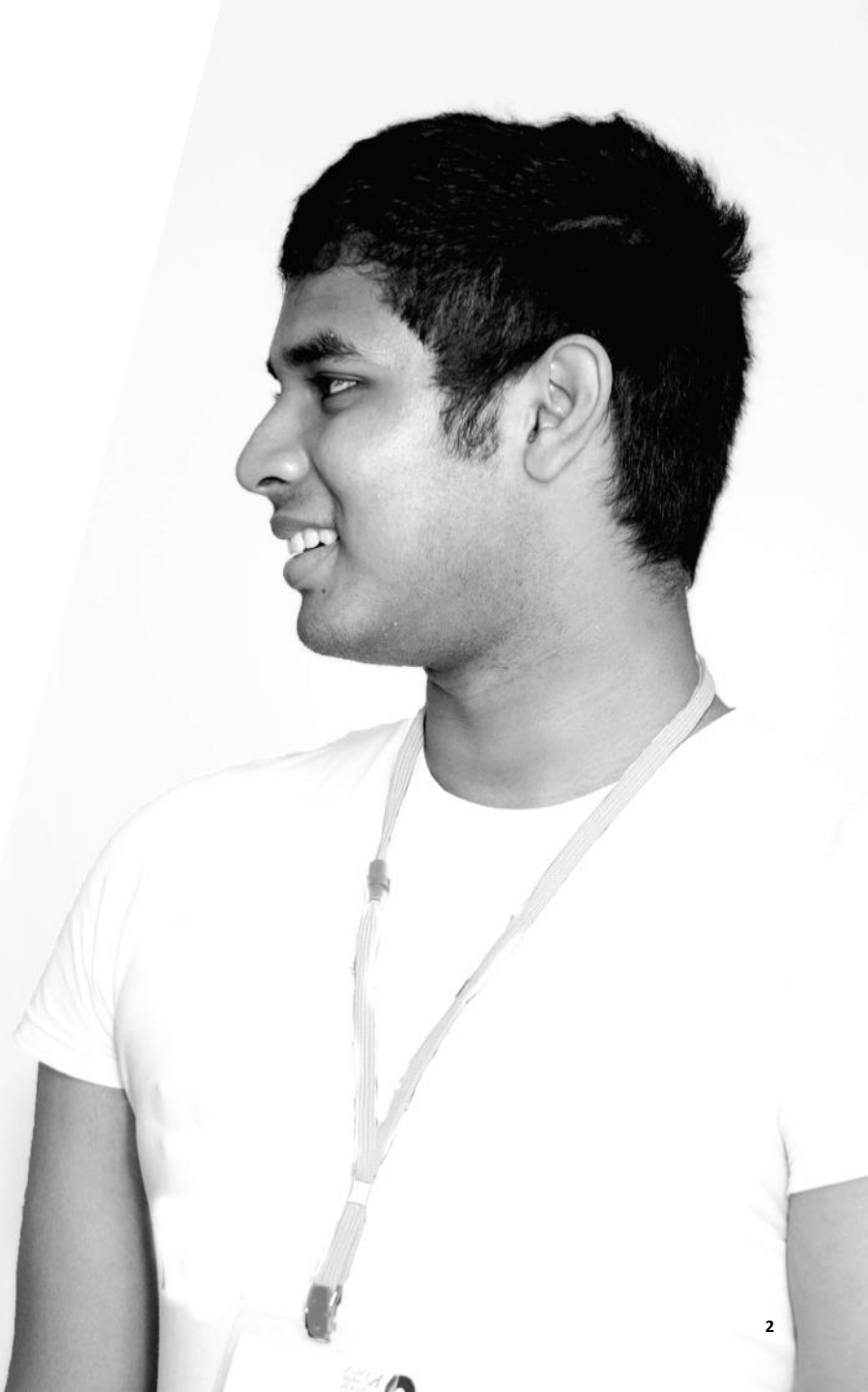
# Using Advancing Access in your school or college

Paul Martin, Project Manager

Thursday 14th February 2019

# Coming up...

- What is Advancing Access?
- Our web resources
- Virtual conferences
- Video case studies
- Coming soon...
  - Advancing Access blog
  - More “on the ground” CPD training
  - A new strand of resources



# The aims of the project

- Advancing Access focuses on teacher CPD. Our target audience is teachers and careers advisors, not young people

- As a result  of our interventions, we hope that teachers and advisors will be in a stronger position to better support the progression of their students to leading universities

- As a mainly online project, we are able to transcend geographical boundaries. Many schools are not located near a Russell Group university, and may not be able to access their outreach work easily

# The Russell Group

University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
Cardiff University
Durham University
University of Edinburgh
University of Exeter
University of Glasgow
Imperial College London
King's College London
University of Leeds
University of Liverpool
University of Manchester
Newcastle University
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
Queen's University Belfast
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University College London
University of Warwick
University of York
London School of Economics
Queen Mary University of London

# Strands of CPD

- How do I help my students choose a university and course?
- How do I help my students apply to university?
- How do admissions processes work?
- How do I help my students make the right choices for post-16 study?

# Each strand contains...

- a presentation for peer to peer CPD
- an interactive guidebook
- quick reference sheets
- worksheets for staff reflection and evaluation
- activities for use with learners
- video case studies

www.advancingaccess.ac.uk

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ADMISSIONS PROCESSES | APPLICATION RECEIVED | CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION | CONSIDERATION | UNIVERSITY RESPONSE | STUDENT DECISIONS | CONFIRMATION | FURTHER INFORMATION

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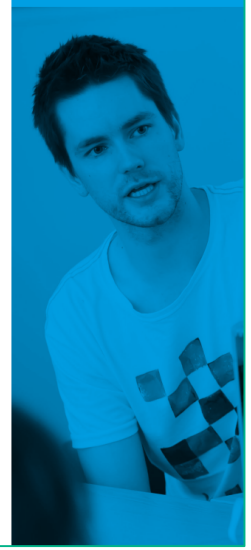
Section 2
Application received



## A 'gathered field' approach

Many courses operate a gathered field approach in order to consider all applicants together. This means that admissions staff wait until the closing date to start assessing applications for a course, which can lead to a long wait for students who apply early.

Other courses may assess applications as they arrive and begin making admissions decisions earlier in the process.

Regardless of the approach taken to assess applications, all students applying by the deadline will be given equal consideration and assessed against the same criteria as all other applicants.

Leading universities often receive many more applications than the number of places available.

As a result, many highly selective universities are unable to make offers to all those who are predicted to achieve (or have already achieved) the basic entry requirements.

It takes time to consider the additional information, including:

- additional achievements
- information within the personal statement and academic reference
- contextual information
- results from tests or interviews.

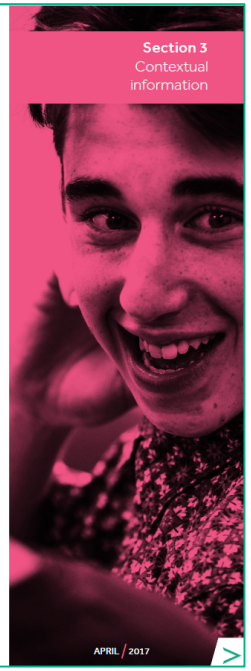
Admissions processes vary across leading universities and between courses.

The processes have been designed to ensure that:

- all applicants are considered equally and fairly
- there is an assessment of each applicant's talent, potential and ability to succeed on the course
- they admit the best students from the many thousands who apply.



Section 3
Contextual information



## Consideration of contextual information

### Leading universities are likely to consider contextual data.

They want to identify candidates with the most talent, ability and potential to excel on their courses, whatever their social or educational background. Although qualifications and predicted grades are a key source of information about academic ability, universities take a range of other factors into account in order to understand the applicant's achievements in context.

In the past, this focused on health issues or particular family circumstances that may have affected an applicant's ability to fully demonstrate their potential. For over a decade, this has been extended by many leading universities to include the social and educational background of applicants, recognising that this too can impact on their ability to demonstrate aptitude for study.

The use of contextual information is informed by the latest research and guidance showing the impact of socio-economic factors on a student's academic success. This is provided by UCAS, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, the Sutton Trust and institutional evaluations. A recent overview of this research is available in a Supporting Professionalism in Admissions report. Contextual admissions: Examining the evidence (2013). This report highlights research showing that students from state schools and colleges get better degree classifications than those from independent schools with equivalent entry qualifications. It also highlights that students admitted using contextual data succeed when in higher education, overall, achieving as well as other students. The Russell Group's report, Opening Doors, explores the root causes of under-representation of students from poorer backgrounds at leading universities.

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## Academic references

### Top tips for writing an academic reference

1. The reference should be honest and provide admissions staff with a fair and accurate picture of the applicant.
2. It should include an explanation if the student's past exam results do not reflect current performance and predicted achievement at A-level (or equivalent).
3. It should include an explanation if any special or mitigating circumstances (such as caring responsibilities, difficult family circumstances or illness) have affected actual or predicted grades and how the student has overcome any difficulties.
4. If it is your school policy not to offer AS- subjects, include this information in any
5. It should place the student's performanc just about saying whether an applicant i information about your school and its co
6. It should include evidence that the candi researched the area, and is well-suited t
7. It should build a picture of the student, i attitude and approach to study.
8. It should include details of any widening initiatives the student has been involved
9. It should include any information about t of the school.
10. You should keep a copy of the reference references and monitoring success.

## Frequently used tests

| Universities | Tests | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BMAT | LNAT | STEP | TSA | UKCAT |
| University of Birmingham | | | | | ✓ |
| University of Bristol | | ✓ | * | | ✓ |
| University of Cambridge | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Cardiff University | | | | | ✓ |
| Durham University | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| University of Edinburgh | | | | | ✓ |
| University of Exeter | | | | | ✓ |
| University of Glasgow | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Imperial College London | ✓ | | * | | |
| King's College London | | ✓ | * | | ✓ |
| University of Leeds | ✓ | | | | |
| University of Liverpool | | | | | ✓ |
| London School of Economics and Political Science | | | | | |
| University of Manchester | | | | | ✓ |
| Newcastle University | | | | | ✓ |
| University of Nottingham | | ✓ | * | | ✓ |
| University of Oxford | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Queen Mary University of London | | | | | ✓ |

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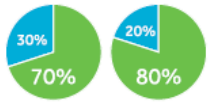
## Developing your students' skills and knowledge prior to application

To make a strong application your students need to develop their subject knowledge, interests and relevant experience. The balance between subject knowledge, skills and experience will depend on which universities and courses they are applying for.

In general, around 70% to 80% of a personal statement should relate directly to the courses applied for and focus on academic interests, knowledge and ability.




Knowledge of the subject | Transferable skills | Work experience

### Knowledge of the subject

owledge of the subject and become further
es. They should be able to express their views and
ents in that subject.

s to help build your students'
ee. Here are our top sources:

date with the latest developments and thinking
on different topic areas (for example, science) on

certain publications that are then made available
share their views on these latest developments.

ight into the subject. For example, psychology
and those interested in science could read New
good websites, so a subscription is not always

g lists for some first-year courses. This material
ct at university level.

t provide subject resources.
ces with articles and revision guides for most
veloped online learning programmes that are
about particular subjects. Future Learn has a list

4. **Step one** – Under 'Courses I am considering', write down the courses that you are thinking of applying for.
   **Step two** – Under 'Decision-making criteria', list the decision-making criteria you have marked as important or very important in question 3.
   **Step three** – Give each university and course a mark out of five, awarding the highest score (5) to those that fully meet your criteria and the lowest score (1) to those that don't (example below).
   **Step four** – Add up the marks for each university and course.

Example

| Decision-making criteria | Courses I am considering | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mathematics at University A | Mathematics and Statistics at University B | Mathematics at University C | Mathematics at University D | Mathematics at University E |
| Location | 5 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 |

| Decision-making criteria | Courses I am considering | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
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| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Score | | | | | |



ADVANCING ACCESS / Student resources

After using the decision-making framework you will have a clearer idea of what you want to do. Use our action plan to help put your decision into practice.

When drawing up an action plan, it is important to set yourself realistic and measurable targets. A commonly used technique for action planning is to ask yourself if your objectives are **SMART**.

- **S** Be **Specific** about what you want to achieve. Do not be ambiguous and communicate clearly.
- **M** Ensure your result is **Measurable**. Have a clearly defined outcome and ensure this is measureable.
- **A** Make sure it is **Appropriate**. Is it an **Achievable** outcome?
- **R** Check that it's **Realistic**. It must be possible when taking account of time, ability and money.
- **T** Make sure it is **Time-restricted**. Set yourself an achievable timeframe, deadlines and milestones to check your progress.

## An example of a **SMART** action plan is:

| Objective | Tasks | Help needed | Potential barriers to completing the task | Evidence of achieving the task | Completion or review date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I want to study a joint honours degree in French and politics but do not know where to study it | Research the universities that offer French and politics | • Use the UCAS website and its course finder<br>• Look at individual university websites<br>• Review subject league tables<br>• Use Unistats to compare courses | • Not enough time to do this research at the same time as studying for my A-levels<br>• I do not know where to start | A list of universities that offer French and Politics | 3 June |
| I want to study a joint honours degree in French and politics but do not know where to study it | Find out which universities I would like to go to | • Attend open days<br>• Speak to current students<br>• Look at the university websites | • No open days available in the time period<br>• Do not know any current students at the university | • A list of five universities I would like to attend<br>• A list of decision-making criteria that is important to me when choosing a university | 15 September |

For more information on **SMART** planning see the **University of Leeds' website**.

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# A guide to leading universities' use of contextual information

Contextual information is the additional data, such as school performance data and socio-economic markers, universities use to provide context for a student's university application and achievements. Universities also use this information when selecting students for contextual admissions schemes that provide a range of activities to help students prepare for their transition to university study.

Each of our university partners has provided a statement on how they currently use contextual information below.

## University of Birmingham

Students from state schools and colleges in the West Midlands applying to the Access to

# Results day – new decisions

For those with new decisions to make, there are four situations:

- Adjustment
- Near miss
- Alternative offer
- Clearing.

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# Admissions glossary

**Access agreement**

An access agreement is a document setting out how a university or college charging higher fees intends to safeguard and promote fair access to higher education through its outreach work, access initiatives and financial support. It also includes targets and milestones set by the university or college itself.

**Adjustment**

Adjustment provides an opportunity for those who meet and exceed the conditions of their firm choice to reconsider where and what to study. Students can look for a course at a different provider while still holding their confirmed place.

**Alternative offer**

If admissions staff are unable to offer a place on the course the student has applied for, they may make an alternative offer for a different course often

ADVANCING ACCESS / Presenter's notes

**Supporting students through the application process**

## 1. Session overview

This presentation will help teachers and advisers who support the UCAS applications process in their school or college. It has been designed to support the professional development of teachers and advisers and should form part of peer-to-peer training sessions.

In addition to providing essential information, the presentation contains a series of optional activities to encourage your colleagues to engage in discussion and share their ideas and experiences of best practice.

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of this session, colleagues will have:

- a deeper understanding of the decisions students need to make after universities have responded to their applications
- identified ways to support students' decision-making processes
- considered ways to improve the support they provide on results day.

## 2. Session plan

This session plan should be used alongside the PowerPoint presentation, **Supporting students through the application process** and Advancing Access guidebook, **How do admissions processes work?**.

Indicative timings are provided as a guide only.

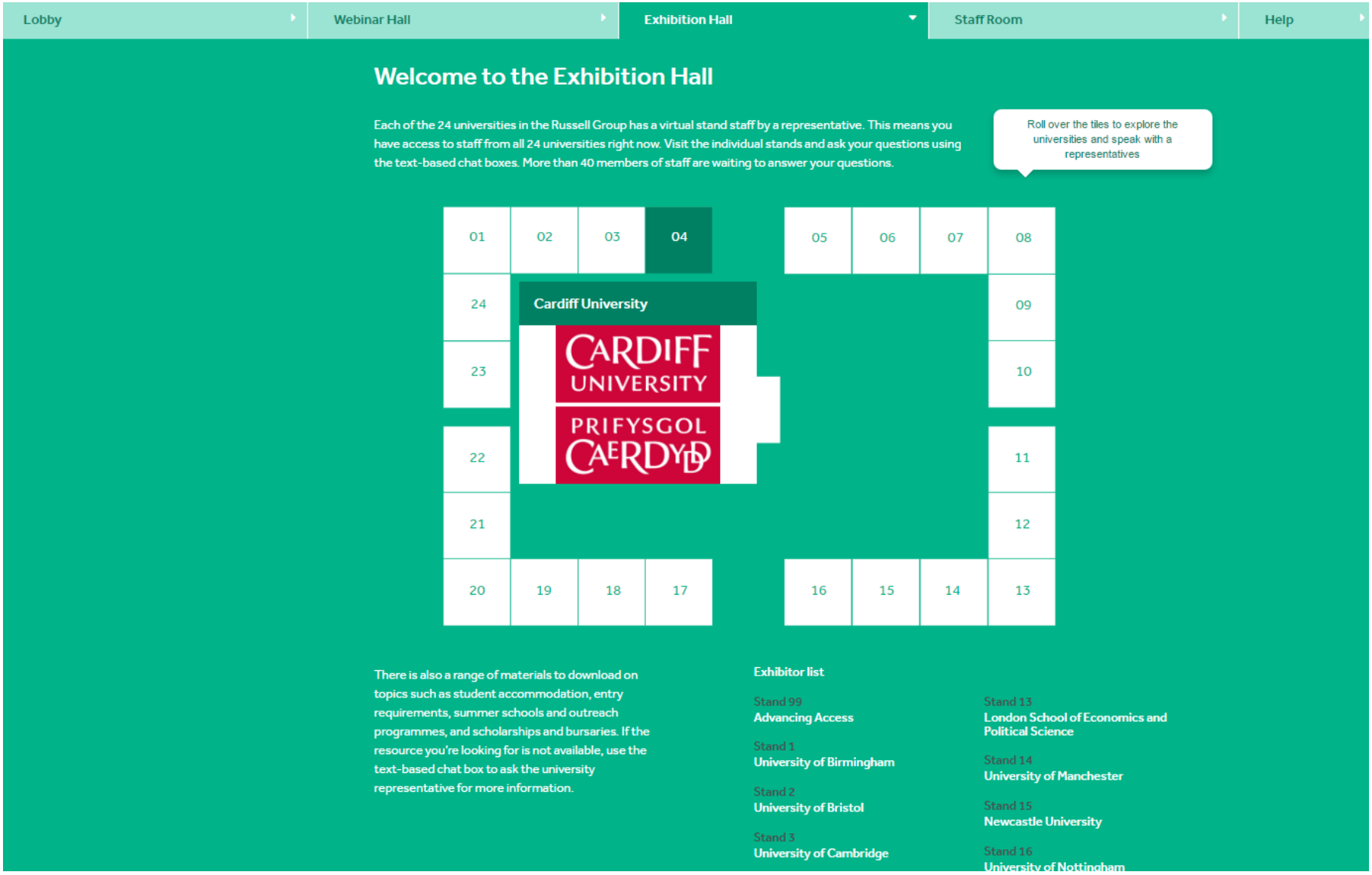
## 3. Resources

# Virtual conferences

**Our virtual events are very similar to today's event, but online:**

- Interactive webinars
- A virtual stall for all 24 Russell Group universities
- Staff room chat

**Our next event will be in June, 3.30pm – 6.00pm. Date to be announced soon!**




# 24 universities in one place at one time

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# Exhibition Hall

Cambridge University

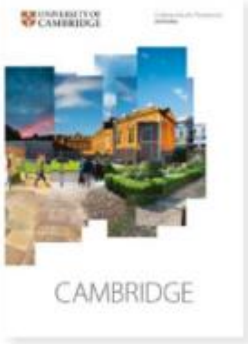
About

With more than 18,000 students from all walks of life and all corners of the world, nearly 9,000 staff, 31 Colleges and 150 Departments, Faculties, Schools and other institutions, no two days are ever the same at the University of Cambridge.

Videos

Floorplan

Downloads



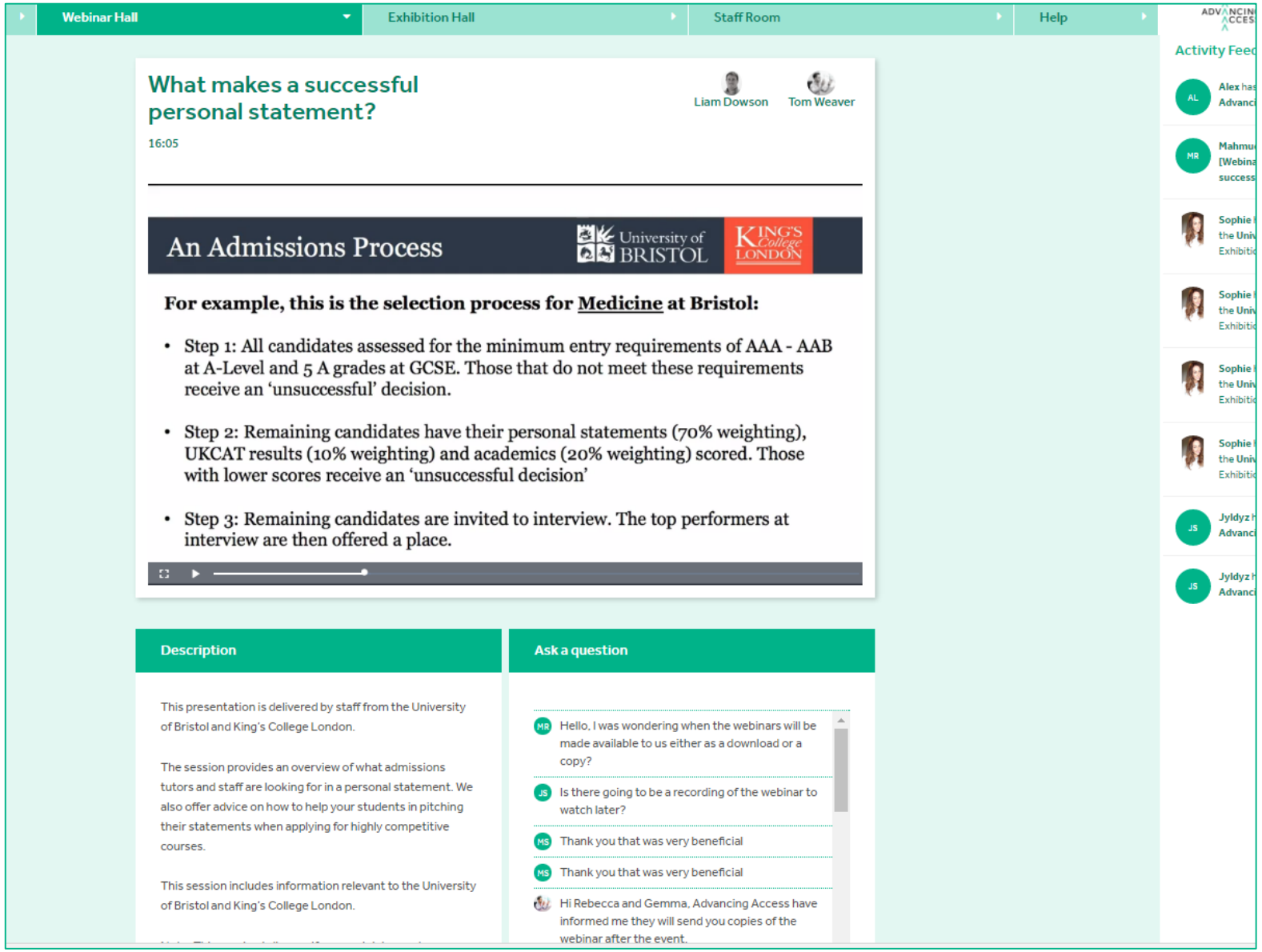

Undergraduate 2014

Ask me a question

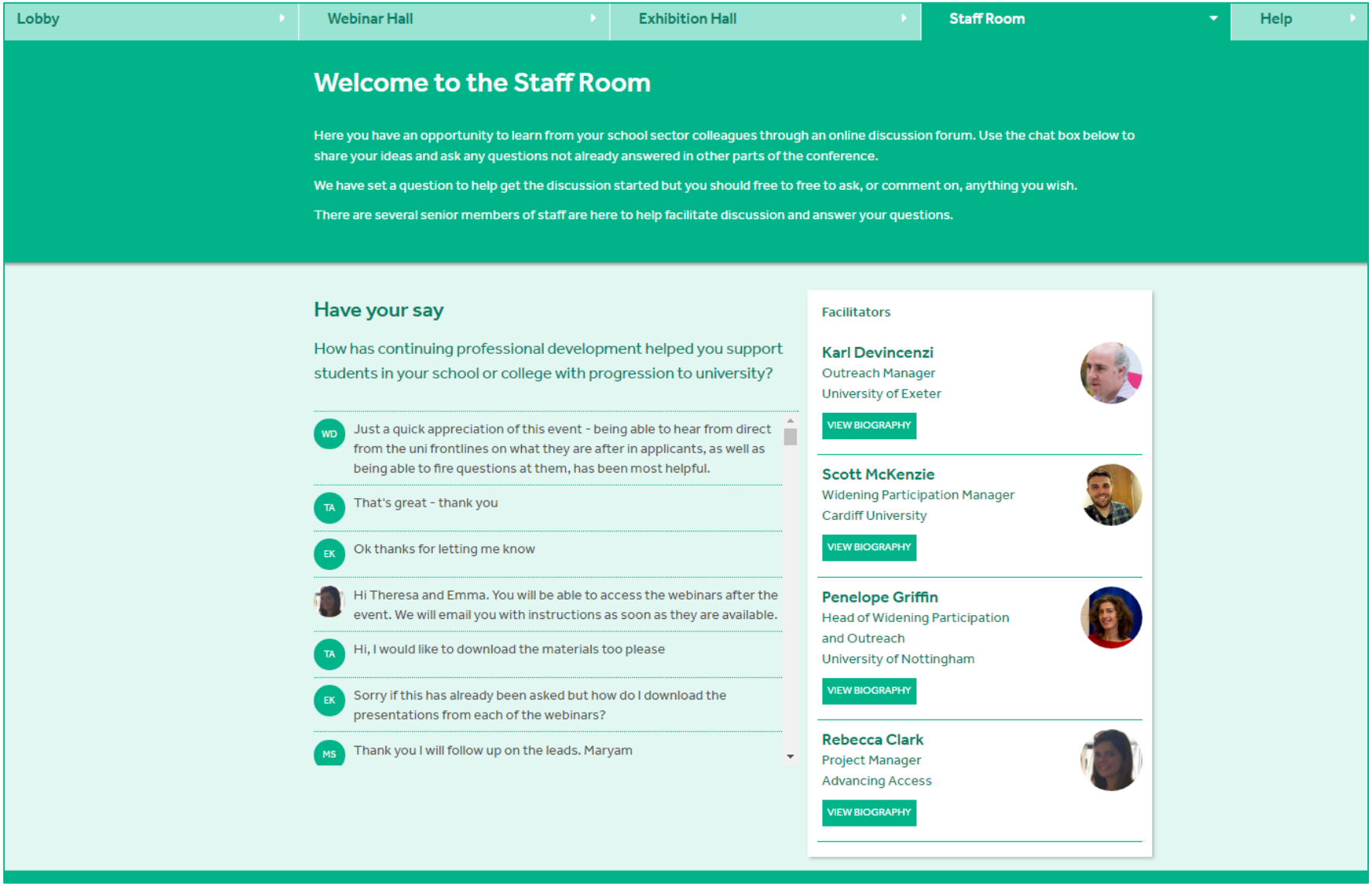
Alison Brown
Senior Lecturer
Cambridge University

You
Endiam et assusamet eiciae incilic tem faccaboria dolorepe peratur eperum

Alison




# Webinar in action...




# Share ideas, ask questions, debate!

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# Case study videos

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# Coming soon!

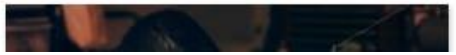
All Category Category Category Category

Blog Article dolor sit amet consectetur elit

Catagory

Blog Article ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur do...

Blog Article ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur do...



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# Talk to us!

Advancing Access is a dialogue between universities and teachers and advisers. Please let us know..

- If there are new resources you'd like which we don't currently offer
- If you'd be interested in writing a blog post for us
- If you'd like to contribute to a webinar at a Virtual Conference
- If you'd like us to deliver some Advancing Access CPD in your school or college

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# Questions?

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- King's College London / University of Leeds / University of Liverpool
- London School of Economics and Political Science / University of Manchester / Newcastle University
- University of Nottingham / University of Oxford / Queen Mary University of London / Queen's University Belfast
- University of Sheffield / University of Southampton / University College London / University of Warwick / University of York