



Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

**Meeting new challenges in admissions -
the professional challenge**

Next Steps in Admissions to HE – 19 October 2011

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What does professionalism mean?

- SPA - the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme
- Established in 2006 following the Schwartz Report, *Fair Admissions to Higher Education 2004*
- Independent and objective voice on HE admissions, a small team with over 75 years strategic, policy and practical experience between us
- What does professionalism mean now in the new HE landscape?



What does professionalism mean in an admissions context?

- Professionals are extremely competent, they are experts in their job
- What do admissions professionals share with professionals in other areas of an institution - lecturers, staff in finance, student services, planning etc?
- Outward facing role of admissions - and student recruitment, outreach, WP - the wider applicant experience
- The role of UCAS in providing a professional service between member institutions and applicants
- Views of government, media, schools, colleges, parents and applicants - are practices and processes fair and transparent?

The challenge of fair admissions and professionalism

“Over the past few years, the issues relating to admissions to higher education have risen to the very top of the educational and political agenda.

There has been public debate about the criteria that universities and colleges should apply in deciding which applicants to admit. In general, this debate has focused on broad principles and practices”

Consultation - the Schwartz Admissions Steering Group, 2003

What are the new challenges?

- Are the challenges for professionals in admissions still the same today?
- Applicants want
 - a professional service from HE
 - a good course and a good student experience that meets what they want from HE
 - to be able to consider costs and any financial package available (if any)
 - value for money

What are the new challenges?

- What the Government wants includes
 - a professional service from HE
 - good quality, clear public information about HE
 - good quality teaching and learning
 - ‘students at the heart of the system’
 - a good student experience
 - better retention
 - improved social mobility through fairer access

Plus different administrations round the UK want different things or have a different emphasis

Professionalism in HE admissions

- Autonomy of institutions over admissions policies and decisions (HE Act 2004) - responsibilities come with that freedom
- All universities and colleges strive for professionalism and fairness when admitting students
- Acknowledged that admissions processes generally fair (Schwartz Report 2004)
- Much progress has been made since 2004

What are the new challenges?

- **Increasing competition** and price/financial packages variations between institutions, between administrations and globally
- **Complex controls** on undergraduate student numbers in England
- **Conflicting priorities** e.g. The need to square AAB+ and Access Agreements with greater outreach to attract disadvantaged students
- **Excellent, quality service** - need to maintain and enhance the service level for applicants. New QAA Quality Code to incorporate Admissions code of practice

What are the new challenges?

- **More qualifications** - and curriculum change throughout the UK, UCAS Qualifications Information Review
- **More routes in to HE** - vocational progression, APL, apprenticeships
- **More flexible HE provision** - part-time, HE in FE, on-line, blended and WB learning, more private providers
- **More public information** about HE for potential students, transparency, Key Information Set – KIS
- **More IT developments** – strategic data analysis, monitoring and tracking, automated processes, CRM, social networking

What are the new challenges?

- **Review of admissions process by UCAS** - consultation on proposals for the future
- **More widening participation/ fair access** - encouraging and supporting **all** students with potential to aim higher for an HE course that is right for them, at a institution that can provide what they need, when they need it; contextual data; social mobility
- **More work on retention** - admit applicants to the right course for them
- **More work on widening participation to taught postgraduate courses** for home students
- **Economic situation** - squeeze on finances before the new fee regime is fully implemented; more work, fewer resources

What are the challenges for professionalism for 2012?

- **Changes during the admissions cycle**
 - Student number controls in England 2012-13 - announced by HEFCE 17 October, consultation on 2013-14 in February 2012
 - Access Agreements - any revised or new to be submitted in November and assessed by OFFA in November
- **Implications for the applicant experience** - fairness and good practice
- **Planning and managing admissions** - all staff involved need to be briefed and understand the implications of the new arrangements for their role and for their institution
- **Tracking and monitoring data** - good internal systems needed

How can SPA help HE providers meet the challenges

SPA's mission is to champion fair admissions and access to higher education by developing and leading on good practice in the recruitment and selection of students.

SPA's three strategic aims:

- 1. Supporting the development of HEIs' good practice and professionalism in admissions**
- 2. Fair admissions, access and social mobility**
- 3. Integrated strategic approach to admissions**

How can SPA help HE providers meet the challenges

- 1. Supporting the development of HEIs' good practice and professionalism in admissions**
 - SPA has the knowledge and expertise to work with and for HEIs to provide advice, guidance and good practice on fair admissions
 - SPA's good practice is shared across the sector - individual institutions do not have to use resources to meet these challenges on their own
 - SPA briefing document on admissions implications of student number controls in England
 - circulated to institutions 18 October
 - three events to discuss issues and good practice

How can SPA help HE providers meet the challenges

2. Fair admissions, access and social mobility

- SPA's good practice enables it to be uniquely placed to revisit what fair admissions means for the sector
- This will enable SPA to ensure it focuses its support and good practice where the impact is most needed. SPA will support HEIs in uncertain times in responding to the fast changing HE environment
- Contextual data in admissions
 - survey - 93 responses, usage is increasing in future
 - research on use and transferable methodologies in using contextual data in admissions/ Access Agreements

How can SPA help HE providers meet the challenges

3. Integrated strategic approach to admissions

- SPA will develop and promote an integrated strategic approach or framework for professional admissions
- This framework will build on our applicant experience strategy
- HEIs will be able to use our good practice tool kit developed in this approach within the context of their own institutions
- SPA aims to enable HE providers to support smarter ways of working through transition to the new arrangements resulting from changes in the financial and external policy environment

How can SPA help HE providers meet the challenges

External evaluation of SPA (July 2011):

“SPA has reviewed the admissions landscape and been an effective contributor to policy fora and there is significant evidence that it has helped HEIs shape their responses to new national agendas. It is evident that SPA has steered practice and significant change within the sector and admissions work in particular.”

- SPA is a resource for institutions - evidence based advice and guidance
- SPA will continue to support institutions in moving professionalism and good practice forward in these challenging times



Thank you

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