Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

Change and reform: how are institutions working towards fairer admissions?

Reforming Higher Education Admissions Conference 24 April 2012

Janet Graham, Director of SPA

Working with HE: The aims and benefits of SPA

Aims:

- Development of good practice and professionalism in admissions
- Promote fair admissions, access and social mobility
- Integrated strategic approach to admissions

Benefits:

- Evidence based expertise on admissions to HE throughout the UK
- A free resource for institutions who wish to enhance excellence in admissions and recruitment
- Wide range of good practice, provision of advice and answering queries
- Funded by all the UK HE funding bodies, with support from UCAS and Universities UK

Issues institutions and SPA are addressing for Fair Admissions

- Development of good practice to enhance and support professionalism and fairness
- SPA Fair Admissions Task and Finish Group – what does fair admissions mean in the changing landscape
- Student number controls - briefings, surgeries and advice in response to queries from HEIs as to the admissions implications of new policies round the UK
- Use of contextual data in admissions - i.e. putting attainment in the context of the circumstances in which it has been obtained - helping to identify potential. Assessing applicants in the round.

SPA's Good Practice for HE – some examples

Admissions Policies	Complaints and Appeals	Interviews
Admissions Tests	Contextual Data	Feedback
Applicant Experience	Criminal Convictions	Part-time admissions
Art and Design	Equality and Diversity	Planning and Managing Admissions
Centralised/ Devolved Admissions	HE in FE	Vocational Qualifications

What is Fair Admissions?

Schwartz principles for fair admissions:

- be transparent
- enable institutions to select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and their potential
- strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid
- seek to minimise barriers to applicants
- be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes

SPA Task and Finish Group on Fair Admissions - Outcomes

- The principles of fair admissions as outlined in the Schwartz Report (2004) are **still relevant and appropriate** in the changing UK HE admissions landscape. Considerable progress has been made on fair admissions.
- The fair admissions principles should support the interests of **both** applicants and of universities and colleges.
- Communicating **effective messages to all** HE admissions stakeholders, in relation to the scale of the current changes impacting admissions is vital.
- Principles of fair admissions apply to **all types of applicants** (full and part time; undergraduate and postgraduate; home, EU and international; young and mature etc) and all parts of the UK.

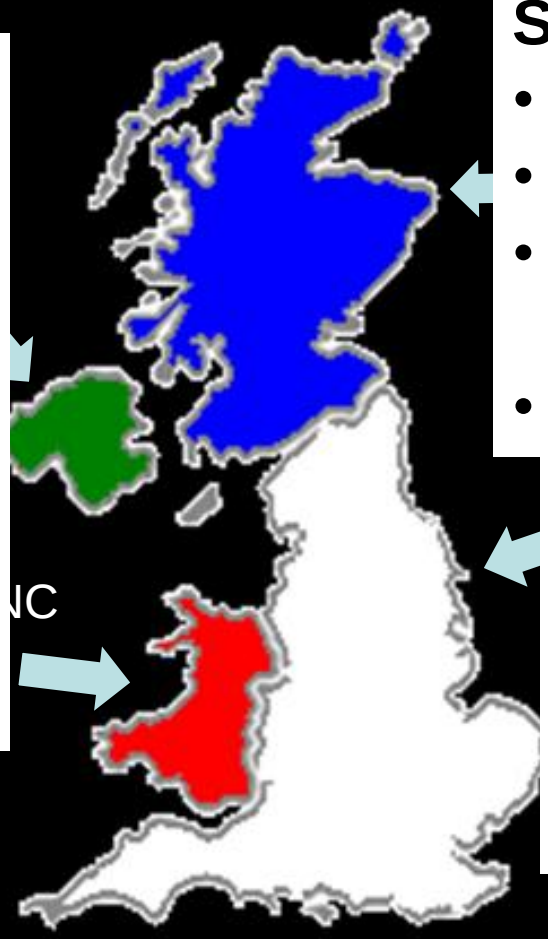
SPA Task and Finish Group on Fair Admissions - Outcomes

- The dynamic situation in the current cycle is challenging for fair admissions, but generally institutions have risen to the challenge. Some stability in policy would be helpful - although unlikely.
- Institutions need to consider how the implementation of fair admissions principles in-house are monitored, and communicated externally.
- SPA will work, with HEIs and other stakeholders, on
  - in-cycle changes, practical advice on fair admissions when such changes become necessary.
  - fair admissions in Confirmation, Adjustment and Clearing
- A major HE sector led review of fair admissions proposed across the UK in 2013, to include schools/colleges and other stakeholders. To tie in with the update on admissions in the new QAA Quality Code.

Countries in UK: Differences in SNC and Fees 2012-13

NORTHERN IRELAND

- NI/EU count for SNC
- Rest of UK exempt
- Fees: Variable fee £1,380 to £3,465 for NI/EU
- up to £9,000 for rest of UK
- Fees: all UK/EU up to £9,000



SCOTLAND

- Scottish/EU count for SNC
- Rest of UK exempt
- Fees: **Free** for Scottish/EU students
- up to £9,000 for rest of UK

- Small specialist Arts/ performing institutions can opt-out
- Fees: all UK/EU up to £9,000

For cross border support for FT and PT undergraduate students see table at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/POLICYANDRESEARCH/POLICYAREAS/FUNDING-AND-MANAGEMENT/

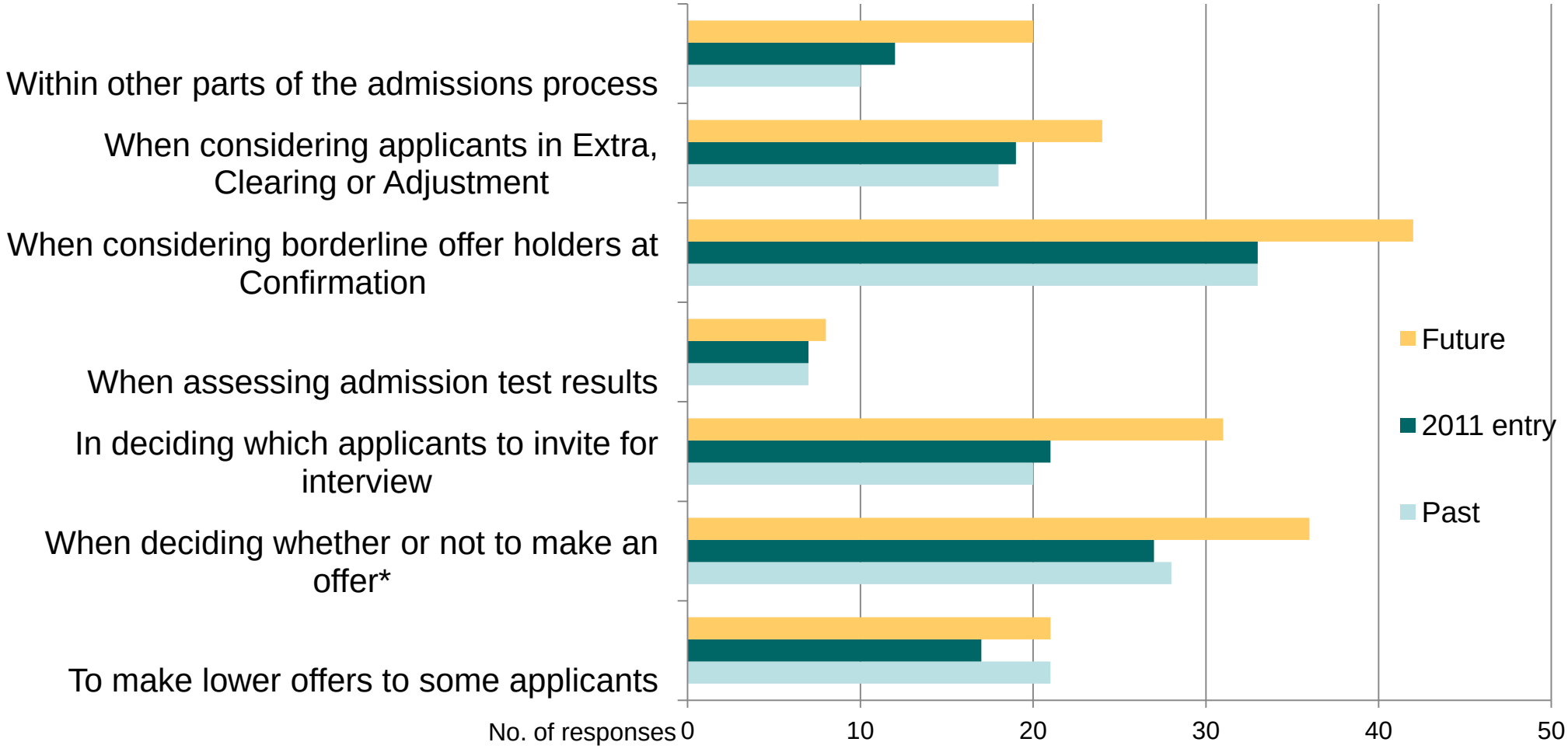
Student number controls and fair admissions

- Major changes for 2012 entry introduced during the cycle, institutions of necessity have adapt rapidly
- Four SPA surgery events on HEFCE SNC and considerations for good practice for staff from over 65 institutions round the UK
- SPA briefing paper for HEI's on good practice when considering admissions and student number controls
- Liaison and support by SPA for HEIs and other stakeholders in Scotland on domicile issues and good practice
- Advice for HE in FE admissions from SPA where colleges have HEFCE funded numbers for the first time
- Briefing by SPA for UCAS staff and input to UCAS SNC fact sheets for schools and colleges

Contextual Data - Initial basket of data for HEIs via UCAS

Educational Background	Socio-Economic Background
▪ School performance: % of students achieving 5 A*-C GCSE including English/Welsh and maths (or equivalent SCQF level 4 in Scotland) ▪ Average school “best 8” GCSE performance (England and Wales) and equivalent SCQF level 4 in Scotland ▪ Average (mean) of QCA points per A level (England and Wales) **and** per student - or average points score Highers equivalent in Scotland	▪ % of students entitled to free school meals (for Scotland % registered) by Local Authority ▪ % of students entitled to EMA (not England) ▪ Lives in a low progression to higher education neighbourhood (POLAR 2) *All being supplied by UCAS for 2012 at time of application, if universities and colleges sign up to take it.* ***This is work in progress****.*

SPA survey: Contextual data use past, present and future



**The full question: "When deciding whether or not to make an offer to applicants who otherwise meet your academic criteria"*

SPA Contextual data research:

- Research report published on SPA website 20 February 2012 www.spa.ac.uk/contextual-data/contextual_data_research_project.html
- Case study institutions reported contextual data use was effective in a competitive field.
- They highlighted rather than 'levelling down' it is about seeking excellence; it widens the pool of applicants, and aids identifying the 'best applicants' with the greatest potential and likelihood of a successful degree outcome.
- Added value of contextual data: its contribution to WP strategy and delivery of targets; consistency of approach in the application of admissions procedures; targeting of support services and bursaries.

What will happen now the report is published?

- SPA will explore with the relevant UK education departments, HE funders, UCAS, HESA and others as to how
  - data quality can be developed, crucial for successful use of this data
  - what other indicators and additional data sources could be made available, preferably via UCAS.
  - gaps in the data: free school meals by school not available, issues for those not at school or college, qualifications other than A levels/Highers, part-time students, differences in data from different school and college types in UK.
- Institutions using contextual data should plan to ensure it can be part of core IT systems; linked to management information to aid tracking, monitoring and reporting and for better targeting of bursaries etc.
- OFFA Access Agreements – use of contextual data suggested, and cost in developing/using contextual data can be included

Thank you
Your feedback is welcomed

More information from: enquiries@spa.ac.uk or 01242 544891
www.spa.ac.uk

Support from an applicant experience strategy

- Built under four broad stages

- The applicant experience – the SPA definition

"The applicant experience encompasses all the opportunities or points of interaction between higher education and a potential student."

- Effective information, advice and guidance links and underpins engagement through all pre-entry stages and beyond, it aids fair admissions
- *www.spa.ac.uk/applicant-experience*