Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

Part-time, Distance and Flexible Study in Higher Education

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Recruitment and admissions to part-time and flexible programmes

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Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)

Purpose

- Development of good practice and professionalism in UK admissions
- Promote fair admissions and access. Support social mobility initiatives

Provides

- Evidence based expertise on admissions to HE throughout the UK
- A free resource for institutions who wish to enhance excellence and fairness in admissions and student recruitment
- Wide range of good practice, provision of advice and answering queries
- Independent - funded by HEFCE, UCAS and UUK
- *Part-time objective - analysis of issues, research to develop an evidence base to enable further good practice development*

Milburn

‘ It is important that **all admissions processes**, whether through UCAS **or direct to the university**, are based on the same principles: transparency, fairness and holistic assessment. The sector needs to work collaboratively to ensure that this is the case.’

University Challenge: How Higher Education Can Advance Social Mobility, October 2012, p. 51

Fair admissions – Good Practice principles:

'Equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations.'

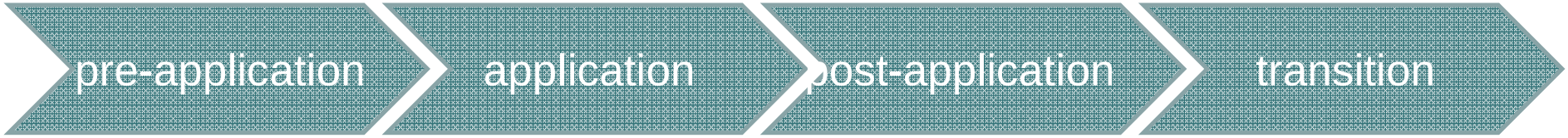
HE providers should:

- be transparent
- 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, underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes

Fair Admissions to Higher Education: recommendations for good practice, September 2004 (the 'Schwartz Report')

What is the applicant experience strategy?

- Built under four broad stages



- The SPA definition:

'The applicant experience encompasses all the opportunities or points of interaction between higher education and a potential student. Such experience affects whether an individual:

- ***chooses to apply to higher education***
- ***then becomes a higher education student***
- ***is retained as a higher education student.'***

www.spa.ac.uk/applicant-experience

The Applicant Experience Strategy

- The benefits for the institution should be
  - **more integrated ways of working, with efficiency gains**
  - **improved quality practices and procedures to give competitive advantage, enhance reputation and aid retention**
  - **ability to take advantage of external changes quickly**
  - **enhanced staff professionalism and understanding of strategy**
- The benefits for the applicant: **transparency, a better experience**

The offer

‘Institutions may be reluctant to extend or develop part-time provision due to concerns around the costs of adapting services and infrastructure, lower returns from part-time provision compared with full-time, challenges in changing staff contracts, and perceived risks to quality and reputation. ‘

BIS Research Paper number 68, June 2012

“whilst we may want to increase the number of part-time students in theory, the reality is due to timetabling, staff not wishing to extend their teaching day any further and funding, the part-time offer is not very attractive, i.e. they'd have to come in for a lecture on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, meaning they can't really work around their studies - defeating the object!”

Large Russell Group Institution, October 2012

Recruitment

‘Some institutions may see no reason to change their current orientation to part-time provision as demand for HE is high and most institutions can easily fill their places and are over-subscribed, although institutions are unsure of the potential effect of the HE policy changes on demand.’

‘This risk/reward ratio needs to change before many HEIs are to make significantly more part-time provision available.’

BIS Research Paper number 68, June 2012

Is the market changing?

England - courses subject to HEFCE Student Number Controls (SNC)

2012 entry: Acceptance of offers (too early for final accepted student figures)

AAB+ offer acceptances	**down 15%**
A Level AAB+	down 17%
Non-A Level AAB+	down 12%
Non-AAB+ (SNC) offer acceptances	**down 15%**

Interim assessment of UCAS acceptances by intended entry year, country of institution and qualifications held, UCAS Analysis and Research, 20 September 2012

PT Admissions – flexibility

The way HEIs organise part-time study varies, not just between institutions but also within institutions, along a spectrum with integrated provision at one end and bespoke provision at the other. It is difficult to define the form of part-time study. **Hard and fast definitions could have the potentially unintended effect of restricting the flexibility of provision – one of the advantages that students identify with the part-time model.**

BIS Research Paper Number 68, Expanding and Improving Part-time Higher Education, p.17

Collaboration

Key interactions and communications – who with?

- senior management
- schools, departments and faculties
- recruitment and school and colleges liaison staff
- widening inclusion staff
- marketing staff
- international recruitment and admissions staff
- planning staff
- finance staff
- student records staff
- student experience/ retention staff

So…

1. One part of the solution for part-time recruitment and admissions is for senior staff to think it is important.
   This will not happen because they think it is *nice*, but because they think that if they do not address PT recruitment and admissions it will harm their institutions.

2. PT applicants should receive the same level of support and assistance which (hopefully) full-time applicants receive, and an appropriate recognition of their many different needs and pathways

3. To become part of the mainstream at national and institutional levels all interested groups will have to start working together, lobbying together and talking to each other.

Questions and feedback welcomed

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www.spa.ac.uk