Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

# Access and Admissions to Higher Education National Conference

## Fair access and admissions in a competitive environment

30 October 2012

Janet Graham, Director of SPA

# What is SPA?

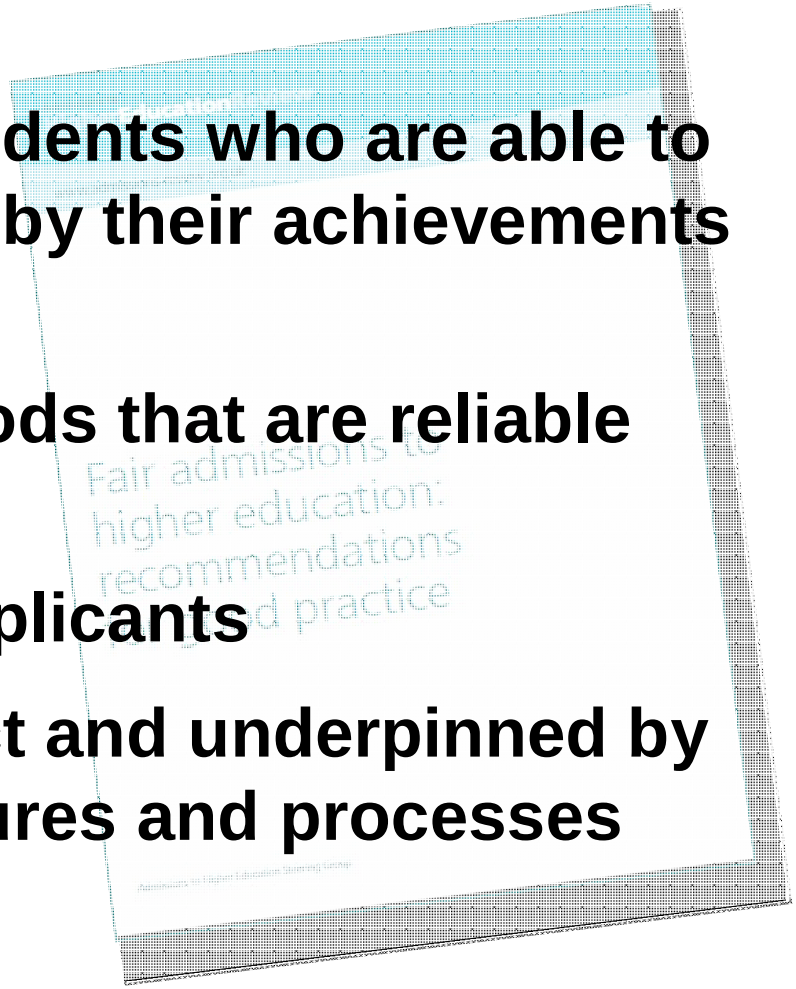
- Set up in 2006 following the Schwartz Report *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice* 2004

*" The Group recommends the creation of **a central source of expertise and advice on admissions issues**. Its purpose would be to act as a **resource for institutions** who wish to maintain and enhance excellence in admissions. Such a centre could **lead the continuing development of fair admissions**, evaluating and commissioning research, and **spreading best practice**."*

- UK's independent, free and objective voice on fair HE admissions
- Small team, but with practical and relevant experience

# What is Fair Admissions?

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



# The applicant experience

- Built under four broad stages

- Adopted a behavioural view of ‘experience’

*Interactive participation and engagement,*

*not a passive journey*

- Linked and underpinned through effective

inform**ing**, advi**sing** and guid**ing**

# The applicant experience

## A good applicant experience

- is mutually beneficial to both the applicant and the higher education provider
- prepares, informs and provides equality of opportunity to enter higher education
- should accurately match the student's aims, abilities and aspirations with the character of the institution.
- therefore improves student retention and enhances the strategic mission of the institution

## A poor applicant experience

- is inherently detrimental to both the applicant and the higher education provider – *both lose out*
- perpetuates barriers to entry
- disengages potential applicants and their advisors
- risks incongruence between student expectations and institutional character
- therefore embeds an enrolment strategy leading to unfulfilled potential and increased drop-out

# How contextual data can help fair admissions

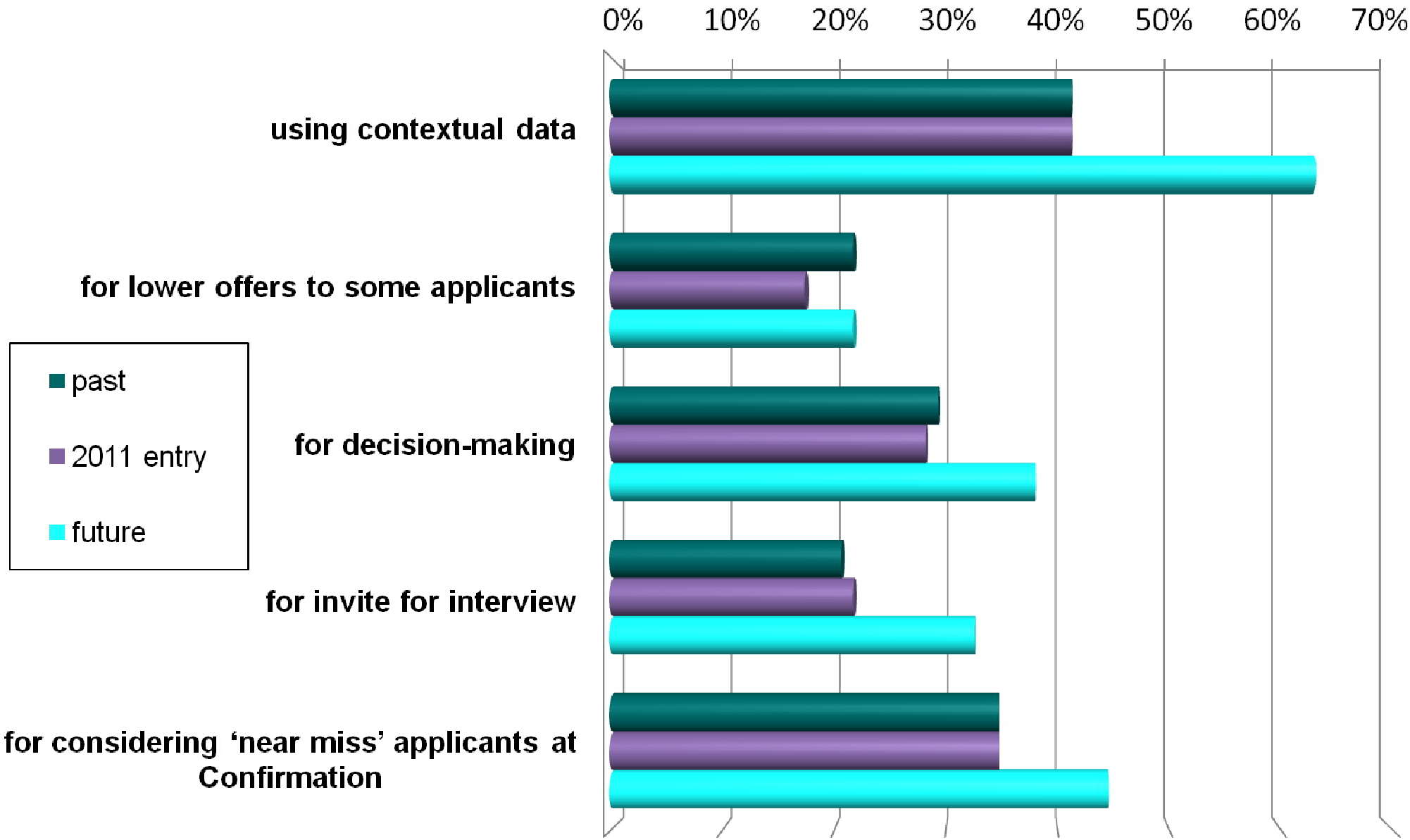
**SPA's definition:**

- Data used by universities and colleges which **puts attainment in the context of the circumstances in which it has been obtained**; currently mainly educational, geo-demographic and socio-economic background data.

**Who is using it?**

- Initially to help selective courses differentiate more fairly between suitable applicants
- Also helps identify, monitor and track potential students from disadvantaged backgrounds – useful for both recruitment and selection (and for access agreements)

# SPA survey: Contextual data use past, present and future



# SPA Contextual data research:

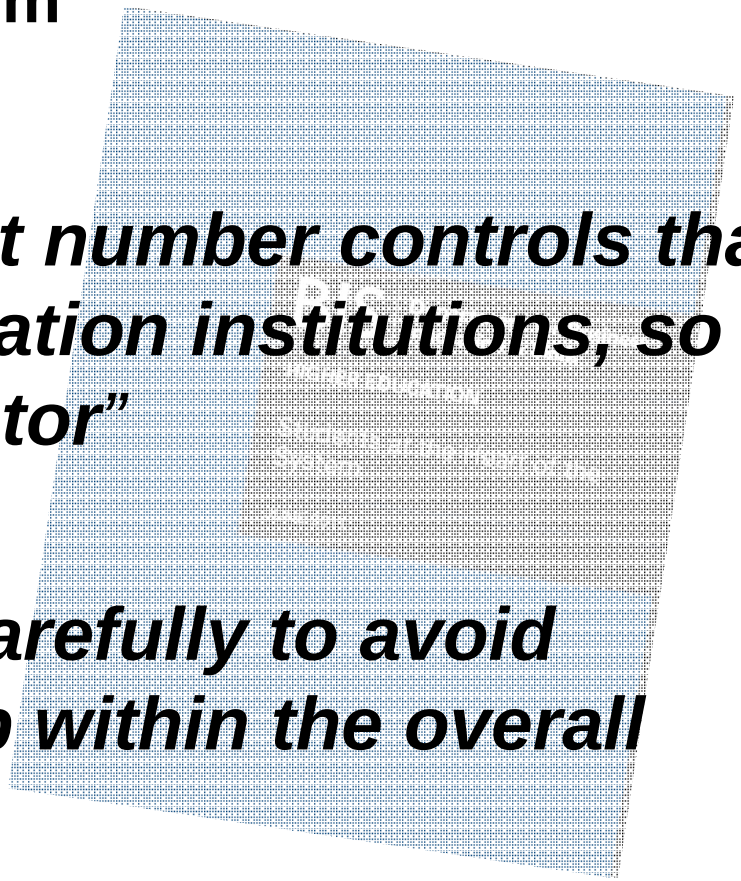
Research report published on SPA website 20 February 2012
www.spa.ac.uk/contextual-data/contextual_data_research_project.html

- Not about 'levelling down' – it's about seeking excellence
  - widens the pool of applicants
  - aids identifying those with the greatest potential and likelihood of a successful degree outcome.
  - contributes to WP strategy and delivery of targets
  - adds consistency in admissions procedures
  - targets support services and bursaries

**But** Data quality needs improving to widen out use of contextual data by more institutions

# HEFCE Student Number Controls and fair admissions

- HE White Paper (England)
  **'Students at the Heart of the System'**
  June 2011



*"We will move away from the tight number controls that constrain individual higher education institutions, so that there is a more dynamic sector"*

*"We will manage this transition carefully to avoid unnecessary instability and keep within the overall budget"*

# HEFCE Student Number Controls and fair admissions

## Two main elements influencing behaviour:

- New fee levels impacting on applicant behaviour
- New number controls impacting on institution behaviour

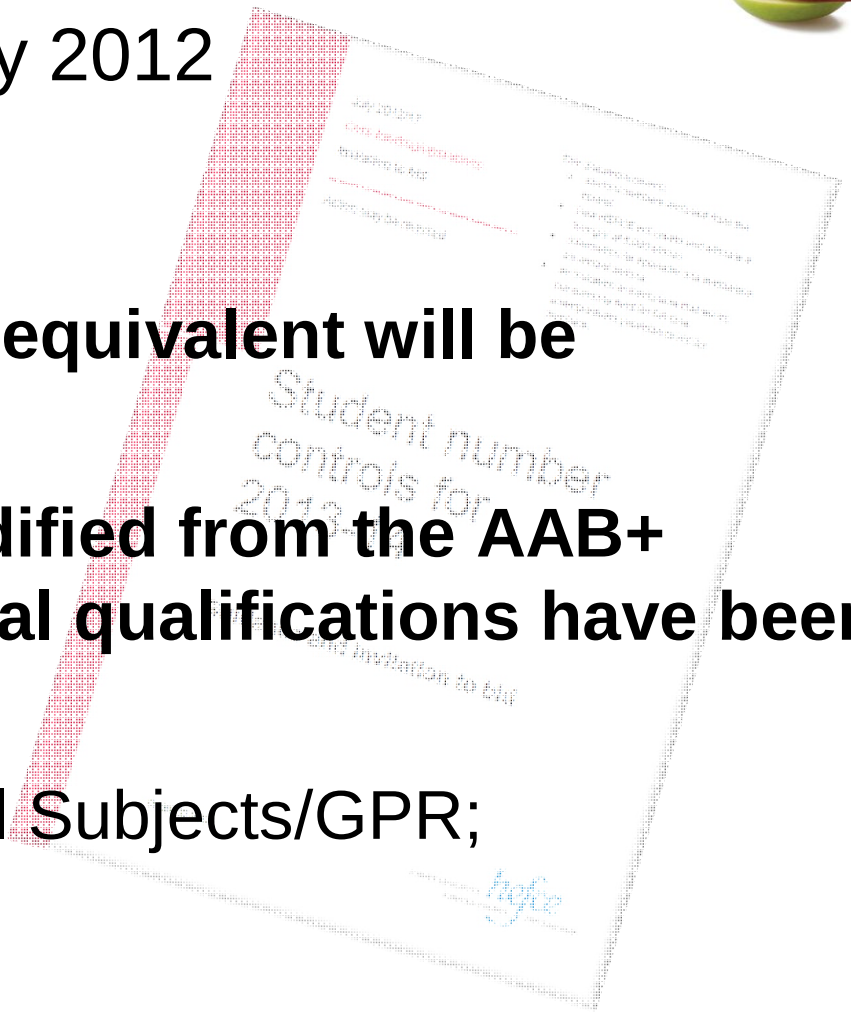
**Speed of change:** Last year, there were no experts

# Planning changes for 2013

- Priorities for planning based on lessons learned
- Key priority areas at the SPA event were:
  - **Strategies for managing numbers**
  - **Increased and more informed recruitment/ marketing activity**
  - **Improved data analysis, monitoring and review**
  - **Review of entry requirements**
  - **Improved internal communication/ understanding – admissions staff work with planning and recruitment**

# Brief guide to 2013 SNC

HEFCE guidance published July 2012




**Quick highlights: exempt**

- **Students achieving ABB+ or equivalent will be exempted from SNC**
- **Equivalences have been modified from the AAB+ equivalency list and additional qualifications have been added**
- e.g. Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects/GPR;

  Access to HE Diploma

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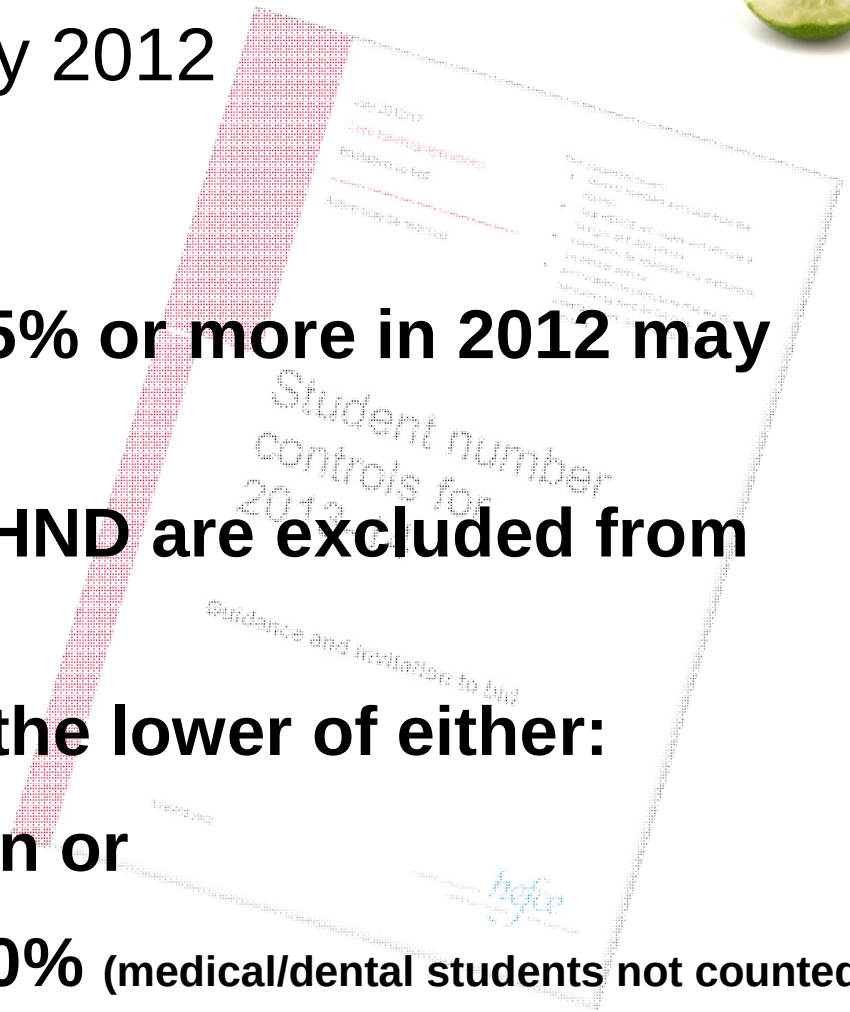


## Quick highlights: core

- **Anyone under-recruiting by 5% or more in 2012 may have core reduced in 2013**
- **Top-ups from foundation or HND are excluded from reduction in the core.**
- **Protected core will be set at the lower of either:**
- **20% of the 2011/12 population or**
- **non-ABB+ population plus 10% (medical/dental students not counted)**

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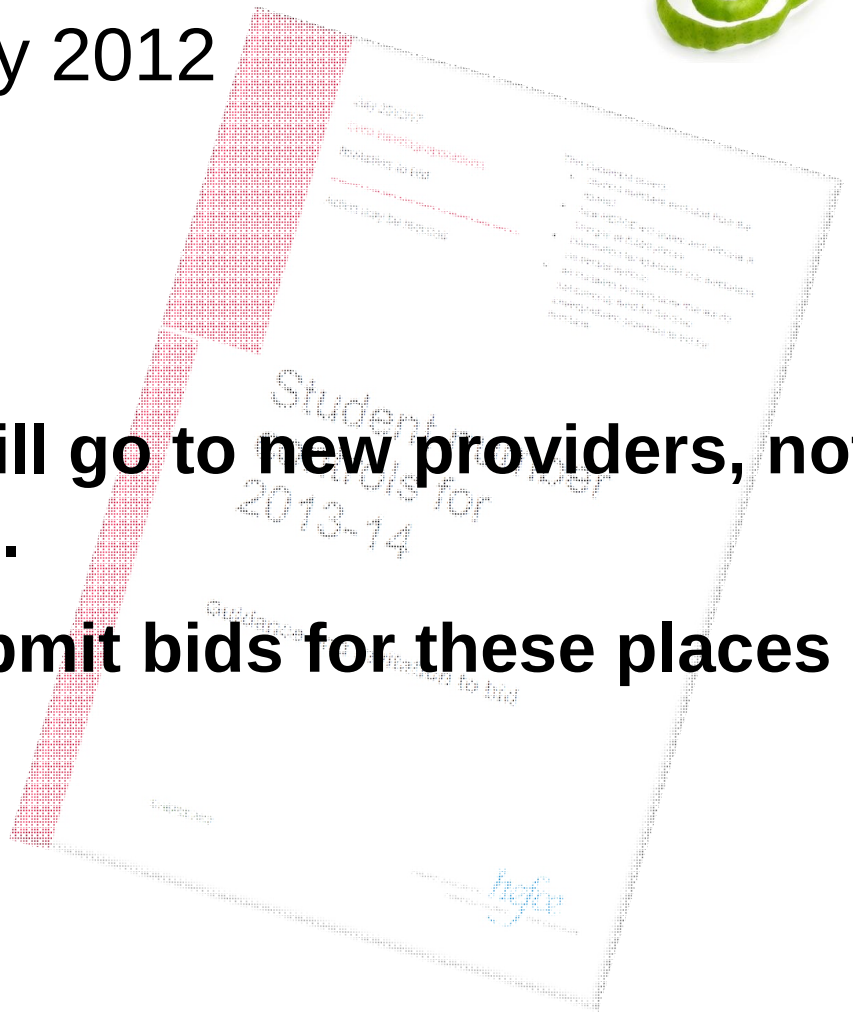


**Quick highlights: margin**

- **5,000 margin places**
- **Around 400 margin places will go to new providers, not previously funded by HEFCE.**
- **New providers needed to submit bids for these places by 1 October 2012.**

# Brief guide to 2013 SNC

HEFCE guidance published July 2012

**Quick highlights: margin**

- **5,000 margin places**
- **The rest will be redistributed automatically by HEFCE according to demand and quality measures**

**approx 3,000 for those with average fee below £7,500; 1,500 for £7,500-£8,250; 100 for franchise provision at HEIs above £8,250**

- **Institutions that do not want additional margin places need to inform HEFCE by 1 February 2013**

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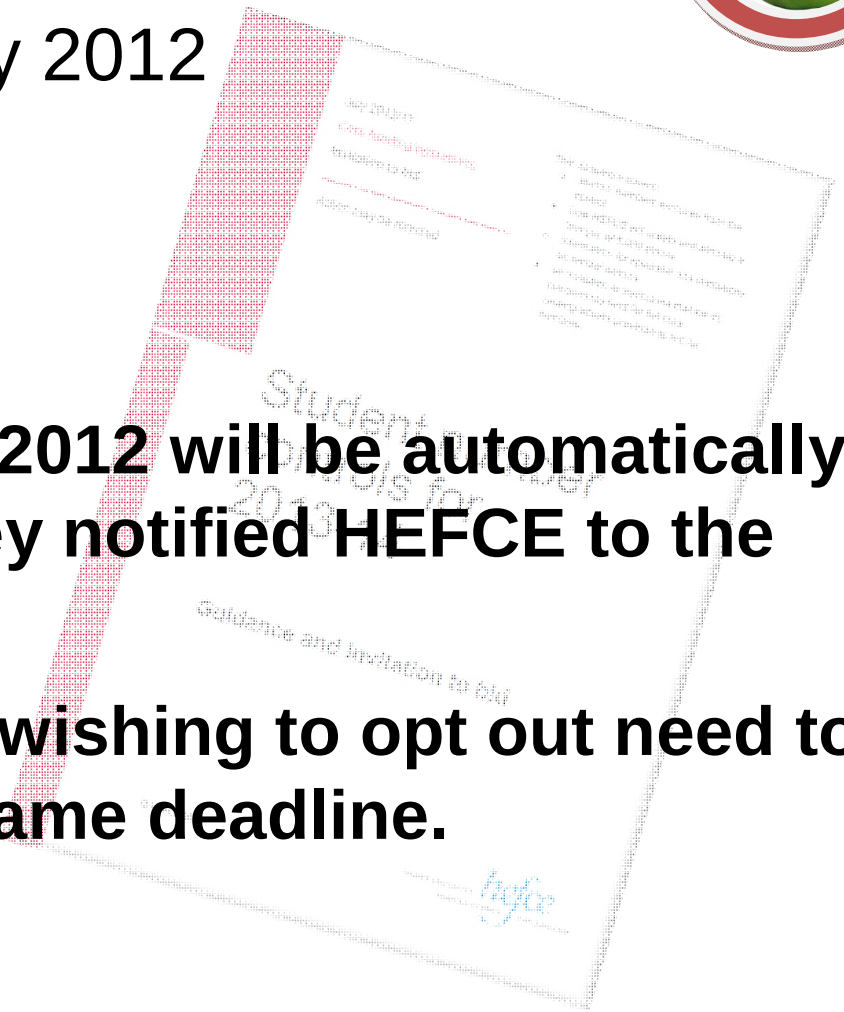

**Quick highlights: opting out**

- **Opting out is still allowed.**
- **Institutions that opted out in 2012 will be automatically opted out for 2013 unless they notified HEFCE to the contrary by 1 October 2012.**
- **Any new eligible institutions wishing to opt out need to submit their request by the same deadline.**

# Thank you

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