

Fair admissions to higher education
- a review of the implementation of the
Schwartz Report principles three years
on:

Report 2: Research Findings

Centre for Education and Inclusion Research, Sheffield Hallam University and
Institute for Access Studies, Staffordshire University

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in Admissions

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Research Team:

Centre for Education and Inclusion Research, Sheffield Hallam University and Institute for Access Studies, Staffordshire University:

Colin McCaig, Tamsin Bowers-Brown, Kim Slack, Ruth Barley, Nick Adnett, Caroline Cripps, Claire Wolstenholme and Ben Willis

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) commissioned this report in response to a recommendation to Government that the *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice* Report (2004) (hereafter referred to as the Schwartz Report) be reviewed after three years. This review was managed by the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) Programme through a research team based at Sheffield Hallam University. This section of the report summarises the evidence reviewed to examine how the principles outlined in the Schwartz Report have been implemented and what changes have occurred in admissions processes in HE in response to the five Schwartz principles. The review used quantitative survey data and qualitative case studies.

The five main principles in the Schwartz Report stated that a fair admissions system should:

- Be transparent, and provide consistent and efficient information
- Select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and potential
- Use assessment methods that are reliable and valid
- Minimise barriers to applicants
- Be professional in every respect and underpinned by institutional structures and processes.

1.2 Project methodology

A team of higher education researchers from the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research (CEIR) at Sheffield Hallam University and the Institute for Access Studies (IAS) at Staffordshire University carried out the research between February and June 2008. The research plan consisted of a mixed-methods approach of five elements: preliminary desk research and literature review; a survey of senior managers/admissions decision-makers at each HE provider in membership of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

(UCAS) in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales; further desk research analysis designed to test the navigability and user-friendliness of institutions' course information web-pages and to analyse the contents of institutional admissions policy statements; qualitative research following up the main issues identified in ten case study institutions; and a survey of stakeholder groups involved in the Schwartz consultation for Fair Admissions to higher education in 2003/04.

Separate interim reports on the literature review, desk-testing and the survey of providers were produced for SPA during the course of the research; this final report updates those reports and presents the research findings, conclusions for SPA and DIUS and helps to inform SPA's continuing work in developing fair admissions to HE. The following sections each give detailed methodological introductions.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review of the literature surrounding admissions to higher education (HE) since the publication of the Schwartz Report in 2004 is part of the wider review of the implementation of the principles in the Report in relation to admissions policies in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education Colleges offering higher education courses. The following assumptions were made to guide the search for relevant literature:

1. As the focus of the research is the implementation of the Schwartz Report principles the search was restricted to articles based on research conducted after the publication of the review, i.e. following the dissemination of the Schwartz Report recommendations. The search, therefore, has been limited to articles and reports published from 2004 but focused primarily on research conducted after then. Literature on the use of predicted grades and the reliability of alternative tests for selecting applicants was not specifically studied here.
2. The review of admissions to higher education began in 2003 in response to a Government request. The Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group (chaired by Professor Steven Schwartz) was asked to carry out an independent review of 'the options that English higher education institutions should consider when assessing the merit of applications for their courses' and make recommendations on fair admissions (DfES, 2004:p2). The subsequent review looked at the evidence relating to admissions, published two consultation papers and engaged in discussions with key stakeholders. While the Steering Group concluded that admissions were generally fair it found that there was scope for improvement.
3. The Schwartz Group identified the following issues as needing to be addressed in the move towards a fairer and more transparent admissions system:
 - Differing interpretations of merit and fairness
 - Difficulties for applicants in knowing how they will be assessed
 - The information used to assess applicants may not be equally reliable and consistent
 - High drop out from some courses which may be related to admissions processes

- Difficulties for admissions staff in selecting from a large pool of highly qualified applicants for those courses that are over subscribed
- The potential burden of additional assessment
- A lack of knowledge, or different levels of awareness of alternative entry qualifications, together with a variable response to such qualifications
- Offers usually made on predicted rather than confirmed examination results
- Complexity of relevant legislation and uneven understanding of this.

In the subsequent report '*Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice*' (DfES, 2004) five principles were set out which were intended to address these issues. While the Schwartz Report recognised that there would be 'challenges for some institutions in implementing the principles' the review recommended that meeting the principles was in the interests of all universities and colleges as well as applicants. The following sections draw on recent literature to discuss some of these challenges and issues.

4. In response to the Report the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reviewed and updated its Code of Practice, Section 10 on admissions to HE (QAA, 2006). In this document QAA acknowledged the importance of the individual institutional context but stressed general precepts that apply. Within a HE system that caters for mass participation applicants will have a diverse range of backgrounds, qualifications and experiences. Admissions policies need to enable decisions about applicants' potential to be made within this complex context, enabling admissions staff to match the ability and aptitude of applicants with the demands of the programme. It is important that this decision-making is underpinned by 'transparent and justifiable' criteria (QAA, 2006:p5). The QAA encourages institutions to be explicit about the rationale behind their policies and procedures, to monitor practice and policies and ensure the competency of staff involved. The code is intended to help HEIs assure themselves and others that the admissions policies and procedures they have in place are fair, transparent, consistent and effective.

2.2 The review in context

5. A search of the peer reviewed academic journals produced very few articles published post-Schwartz Report on the issues identified in the review. However, some of the issues identified at the time of the review may remain. Hodson and colleagues (2005), for example,

make a distinction between 'recruiter' and 'selector' institutions. Similarly, Archer (2005), drawing on Ainley (2003) discusses the relative positions of what they termed gold, silver and bronze HEIs. Bronze institutions are those that have a strong widening participation remit and are in effect 'Clearing' institutions in comparison to the gold and silver 'selecting' institutions. Similar distinctions have also been made between courses; for example, research conducted for Universities UK classified participating courses into three admissions modes: recruiting, recruiting/selecting (minimal reliance on Clearing) and selecting (Universities UK, 2003).

6. The authors of a report for the 1994 Group and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) also distinguish between recruiting and selecting courses stressing, however, that this is not meant to relate to differences between 'new' and 'old' institutions but to the fact that, in reality, most institutions will have both types of courses, each exerting an influence on admissions practices. In relation to research institutions there is a wide variation in terms of the supply of qualified applicants. While some courses may experience an oversupply of applicants, others may face an inadequate supply. Recruiting courses may exist, therefore, in what are primarily selecting universities and a list of subjects affected in this way has been identified (1994 Group, 2008: p21). As the report also suggests, this pattern may change from year to year. This current research project has consciously moved away from categorising institutions along pre and post-1992 lines. However, being primarily recruiting as opposed to selecting, whether in terms of individual courses or at an institutional level, does carry implications in terms of which issues are problematic in relation to admissions. This is reflected in the focus of much of the literature discussed below.

7. Among the issues identified by the Schwartz Report as needing to be addressed in any move towards fair admissions were: a lack of knowledge among applicants to HE; and different levels of awareness of alternative entry qualifications, together with a variable response to such qualifications displayed by institutions. Research conducted around the time of the review suggests that there is limited evidence of how students with alternative (vocational) qualifications are being supported into and through HE (Universities UK, 2005). Research carried out on behalf of Action on Access (Sinclair and Connor: 2008) on contributory factors in the explanation for uneven distribution of vocational qualifications (particularly BTEC Nationals) highlights a number of issues with the way data is gathered and used by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The researchers call for data by type

of vocational award, subject and grade to be made more widely available in order to enable better monitoring of supply and pathways.

8. Hodson and colleagues (2005) examined the way in which HEIs responded to the curriculum 2000 reform of advanced qualifications (A Levels). The authors argue that while admissions statements indicated that institutions supported advanced level reforms this was less evident in the actual admissions decisions made. They identified a number of reasons for this mismatch. First, HEIs were reluctant to discriminate against applicants from schools and colleges that did not offer a full range of subjects or Key Skills qualifications. Second, they were concerned that if they introduced changes they might deter top quality applicants which in turn could be detrimental to their competitive position. Finally, they wished to retain flexibility in their own admissions processes, particularly in relation to matching demand to supply of student places.

9. The issue of institutional autonomy has been explored more recently in relation to reforms to 14-19 education, more specifically the proposed changes to GCE A-levels and the introduction of the Extended Project and Advanced Diplomas (1994 Group, January 2008). Amongst other issues, this research looked at the impact the reforms may have on undergraduate admissions among the members of the 1994 Group, although it is noted that this research was conducted during a relatively early stage of the development of the reforms. The differential influence of recruiting/selecting programmes was evident in the conclusions that the A* grade at A-level will allow research intensive institutions to select with more discrimination among applicants (i.e. of interest to 'selecting' courses); a number of the nascent Advanced Diplomas in subject areas where there are currently low numbers of well-qualified applicants to undergraduate courses (i.e. of interest to recruiting courses) and finally, that member institutions will probably take a 'close interest' in applicants who have completed the Extended Project (i.e. of broad interest rather than specifically to recruiting or selecting programmes). However, in relation to the latter, some institutions also have reservations about the validity and reliability of assessment, the burden on students, the ability of applicants to communicate benefits derived and the potential for plagiarism.

10. The authors of the same report (1994 Group, 2008) also identify as a potential issue a situation whereby admissions tutors for 'recruiting' courses may want to admit Diploma students with entry qualifications below the university-wide average, but may not be allowed to

11. do so by senior management with responsibility for monitoring overall institutional performance measures. Heads of Undergraduate Admissions involved in the research confirmed that the admissions process was designed with the aim of securing management priorities (p18) and a key focus of their work was ensuring that overall undergraduate admission provided the appropriate pattern of recruitment which supports the overarching goals of the institution. The main concern of the admissions staff interviewed was, however, that processes should be fair and open and the majority stated that they sought to admit only those students who they believed would thrive and succeed on the course, regardless of background.

12. Research conducted around the time of the Schwartz Report does suggest that some admissions staff lacked clear guidance on the overall position of their institution. The Fair Enough project (Universities UK, 2003) found that, while there was overt support for fair admissions from Vice-Chancellors, Principals and academic boards, some admissions staff were unclear on what their HEI view was on widening participation. As a result they were hesitant to change practice, for example, by making lower offers to applicants by taking into account factors such as if the applicant had experienced educational disadvantage. The authors of the report emphasise the need to ensure that the message about what is considered acceptable practice is transmitted overtly to admissions staff. They conclude that a fair admissions process is facilitated by good communication between central admissions offices and academic departments involved in recruitment and admission. Similarly, a later project found that while HEIs had been reviewing their policies and mainstreaming good practice in terms of admissions procedures, some of which may have been in response to the Schwartz Report, a key concern for widening participation staff involved in the research was ensuring that admissions strategies for specific groups were university wide and not restricted to certain disciplines (Universities UK, 2005).

2.3 Fairness and transparency

13. The first of the recommended principles in the Schwartz Report is that a fair admissions system should be transparent (DfES, 2004:p7). One of the ways in which transparency can be demonstrated is the use of Entry Profiles for all courses. Entry Profiles should include all entry requirements for a given course, details of the admissions process and decision-making and

any required skills or competencies. They should also include information on any contextual factors taken into consideration in the admissions decision process, together with the weighting given to criteria. The aim is to have Entry Profiles for all courses in Universities UK (UUK), GuildHE and Association of Colleges (AoC) member institutions (i.e. not including private institutions) in the UCAS scheme by September 2009. Evidence collected by SPA suggests that the majority of home and international students find Entry Profiles helpful in terms of their application process (SPA, Nov 2007¹).

14. Parry et al (2006) argue that issues raised in the Schwartz Report around fairness and transparency are particularly pertinent in relation to medical admissions because demand from applicants exceeds supply of places. The authors cite earlier work carried out by Lumsden et al (2005) which suggests that medical school admissions processes in the UK are frequently shrouded in secrecy and differ from one institution to another. Parry et al conclude that, although stated criteria for admissions show commonality across the schools involved in their study, institutions apply these differently and use different methods to select students. Similarly, Dhillon (2007) found that in professional entry requirements for admissions to social work courses, the requirement that students 'possess appropriate personal and intellectual qualities to be social workers' (Department of Health, 2002:2) was interpreted differently across the five HEIs she studied. Appropriate personal qualities are not defined in the Department of Health guidelines however, and the author concludes that clearly defined selection criteria are lacking overall in relation to this because HEIs retain responsibility for admissions decisions.

2.4 Assessment methods

15. As outlined above, the Schwartz Report advises that institutions use assessment methods that are reliable and valid, that additional assessment should be kept to a minimum and tests should be reviewed and researched. The importance of 'holistic assessment' is also

¹ In an Entry Profile survey undertaken by SPA in 2007, 94% of home students and 96% of international students found Entry Profiles helpful or extremely helpful. A total of 2,948 students responded to the survey; 2,596 home and 352 international. Entry Profiles were also used by 84% of respondents.

emphasised. This is defined as an approach which takes into account all relevant factors including contextual factors such as applicants' background, relevant skills and their

achievement. It is suggested that 'broad brush' approaches are generally not appropriate; applicants must be assessed as individuals (DfES, 2004:p6). This issue was highlighted in responses to the Schwartz Report's consultation from both the Russell Group and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP, now GuildHE). The Russell Group pointed out that the mechanisms they have devised to help them identify those applicants who may not achieve the required entry grades but have the ability ('latent talent') are compensatory devices. They stress the need for a long term approach to address poor performance in some schools and colleges to overcome this problem. They also differentiate between two different uses of additional assessment; to identify 'latent talent' as defined above and to help distinguish between a large number of applicants all achieving highly – the 'high fliers'. They also express concern that the use of additional assessment may become a barrier to the former in applying to selecting universities. The response from SCOP (GuildHE) also emphasises that additional assessment is a central issue for their members, many of whom use this approach to select applicants; a process which is informed by research. The Russell Group identify the need for further work on what additional information should be sought from applicants in order to help institutions in their decision-making and to ensure that holistic assessment takes place.

16. As highlighted above, very little relevant literature following the Schwartz Report has been found. The literature that does exist focuses primarily on the area of selecting students for certain courses rather than on admissions processes more generally. In most cases this relates to the use of non-academic criteria in the selection process, either because demand exceeds supply as in the case of medical school applicants and/or in the case of social work where there is a need to 'gate keep' in order to ensure applicants have the appropriate personal qualities. The drive to widen participation and ensure that admissions processes do not disadvantage certain applicants adds to the complexity of this process as does questioning of the predictive quality of A-level scores (see for example, Powis et al, 2007; Holmstrom and Taylor, 2007).

17. The Schwartz Report states that 'a fair admissions system should strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid'. The Report continues by advising that the approach can include a broad range of both 'hard' and 'soft' factors but stresses that this

should be informed by current research and good practice (DfES, 2004:p8). On the issue of admissions tests, SPA define them as:

[A] timed, unseen written paper-based or on-line test, normally taken by applicants to undergraduate courses or programmes in the academic year

before admission to an HEI, the results of which can be used by that HEI as one element in decision-making on an application. (SPA, 2007)

18. SPA estimate that there are around 67 tests currently in use, additionally there are two tests in the pilot stage. Of the remaining tests, five are categorised as 'national' tests of which the UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) appears to be most used by HEIs (used by 24 HEIs primarily for courses in Medicine, graduate entry Medicine, Dentistry). Other tests are devised by individual HEIs and/or with test bodies. According to data from SPA, tests are used by a small proportion of HEIs (approximately 16% of the total 309 institutions in the UCAS scheme for 2008 entry) and for a very small number of courses (fewer than one percent of courses use admissions tests) for which they are only one element of overall assessment (SPA, June 2008).

19. In relation to more qualitative methods of assessment and selection, the Schwartz Report recommends the use of structured interviews as being more likely to predict undergraduate success. Retaining autonomy over admissions decisions is a key factor for institutions. SCOP (GuildHE), for example, in its response to the Schwartz consultation was not fully supportive of common interviews, feeling that they would be difficult to manage. In addition, institutions would be reluctant to lose that element of control over their decision-making, particularly in relation to their reputation and the trust they build with other agencies that the students they select are the 'right' students (SCOP, 2004). The literature available suggests that practice does appear mixed. Parry et al (2006) reviewed current practice in 22 medical schools in England and found that all but two used some form of non-academic criteria to select students although the process varied considerably. Where non-academic and academic criteria are considered in selection the method of assessing UCAS applications in medical schools differed (Parry et al, 2006). While half of the medical schools involved in the study had a complex scoring system whereby marks were allocated to predefined criteria,

others had simpler systems which divided applicants into those invited for interview, those borderline and those not invited. While some medical schools did not interview applicants, some short listed for interviews based on predicted grades. Interviews were also found to vary by length, interviewers (e.g. professionals, service users and professional bodies), content and scoring method. Of the remaining two medical schools using non-academic criteria, one obtained additional information from a questionnaire which was then scored electronically and the results combined with an assessor's scoring of the referee's statement. The other only considered non-academic criteria after applicants were scored on academic results, predicted grades and previous experience in healthcare. Powis et al (2007) also argue that although doctors require a wide range of personal qualities and skills, the objective evaluation of these does not occur until *after* lower achieving applicants have been eliminated. Instead, selection should be based upon multiple criteria, one of which is academic achievement. In this context, a structured interview would be used which would be a data gathering exercise rather than a selection decision.

20. Drawing on the literature, similar issues of selection appear to face those responsible for admissions to social work courses as the need to look at additional non-academic criteria, in this case personal qualities, offers the potential for subjectivity. Holmstrom and Taylor (2007) critically review the research in this area and highlight the complexity involved in devising clear criteria for 'suitability'. Dhillon's (2007) small study of five HEIs explored whether the policy guidance on suitability for social work roles was assisting admissions staff in their decision-making. She concluded that without written suitability guidance there is a risk of decisions being based on subjectivity. McManus (2006), albeit in a very small study of non-traditional students, suggests that for Art and Design admissions there are also issues around subjectivity particularly in relation to those applicants whose portfolio is considered mid-range. Admissions decision-makers then have to select students by interview to assess motivation, enthusiasm etc. which may favour certain students over others and be open to subjective decision-making.

2.5 Minimising barriers for applicants

21. There is a wealth of literature around the barriers facing 'non-traditional' students progressing to HE (see for example the recent review by Gorard et al, 2007). The current

literature search yielded few articles on this in relation specifically to admissions however, some of which have already been discussed above. HEIs are required by law to ensure that their admissions requirements are non-discriminatory and that they have set appropriate competence standards for specific course requirements. Two studies are cited here which refer to the admission process and specific groups, namely disabled students and students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

22. SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities refer to research conducted by themselves and the National Disability Team which found that disabled students often need longer to research their HE choices (report to HEFCE June 2004). Barriers for disabled students can also be greater at pre-entry and entry stage than for non-disabled students and in relation to students declaring a disability, admissions staff need to consider and meet the needs of the applicant. The need to make individual decisions is emphasised. While guidance can be provided for admissions decision-makers about specific impairments, standard admissions policy and procedures may not work at an operational level because guidance cannot be applied across the impairment range without flexibility.

23. An issue for many staff is how to consider students from non-traditional educational routes and family backgrounds in a system which may still be geared around the notion of a traditional student i.e. entering HE directly from school, with A-levels and studying full time. Researchers have also re-examined data from a study originally conducted in 2002 (Shiner and Modood, 2002). The recent study found no evidence that there were large differences in the treatment of applicants from different ethnic backgrounds regardless of type of HEI (HEFCE, 2005). They did, however, find that there was a small unexplained disadvantage for Pakistani applicants who were less likely to be offered a place compared to white applicants after other factors were taken into account. Applicants to Law from all ethnic minority backgrounds apart from Chinese, however, were found to have a lower chance of receiving an offer after other factors were taken into account.

2.6 Professionalism

24. The final principle outlined in the Schwartz Report states that admissions systems should be 'professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes' (DfES, 2004:p8). Again this relates to some of the issues discussed above, for example as in 'clear lines of responsibility across the institution to ensure consistency' (DfES, 2004:p8). The Russell Group, in their response to the Schwartz Group's consultation, accepted the need to professionalise admissions procedures (May 2004). They argued, however, that this should not involve a separate career path for academic staff involved in admissions, but that those staff should remain fully engaged in the academic field. They also accepted the need to provide feedback on unsuccessful applicants but suggested that if further work was required in this area this would need additional resourcing. This, they felt, was particularly relevant to selecting institutions (and courses) because they have large numbers of applicants who are rejected. Resources could not be diverted away from the learning experience of students to support this work.

25. In terms of specific training for staff involved in admissions decision-making, in a study of 22 medical schools, Parry et al (2006) found that only half offered training for staff involved in assessing UCAS applications. Furthermore, the training offered varied considerably. Similarly the training offered for staff involved in interviewing applicants also varied across schools. Dhillon (2007) also suggests that in relation to social work more robust interviewing techniques, which may help to reduce subjective decision-making, would require additional training for those staff involved.

26. The issue of resourcing professionalisation is clearly an important one and the Schwartz Report advocated the 'allocation of resources appropriate to the task' (DfES, 2004:p8). The Steering Group suggested that a centrally located admissions system, either wholly or partially, may be simpler and more cost-effective. SCOP (now GuildHE) was clear in its response to the consultation that decisions around the operation of the admissions process are best made by the institutions themselves. Admissions processes within the 1994 Group are said to be mixed; while some have centralised admissions procedures others have continued to operate a decentralised or devolved system where schools/departments retain some responsibility for

their own admissions policies. Recent research found that 'if an overall trend was apparent, this was to a greater centralisation process' (1994 Group, 2008:p18).

2.7 Conclusions

27. The literature search and review reveals that in the period since the publication of the Schwartz Report in 2004 very few research papers or academic journal articles have been devoted to the subject of admissions to HE and that most of the literature found was in the form of reports by government agencies and HE interest groups (including those published by SPA and the Delivery Partnership). The comparative paucity of research articles, while partly explained by the long lead in time for such articles, can also be seen as a reflection of the nature of the Schwartz Report. *Fair Admissions to Higher Education* might be more readily seen as a non-prescriptive document that has stimulated debate in the form of position papers from practitioner and interest groups rather than set up a series of definitive policies and practices around which opposition could coalesce.

28. This is reflected in the main themes of the literature, for example the emphasis on the differentiation between recruiting and selecting institutions, the competing needs of certain subject areas (i.e. medicine, art and design) when it comes to issues such as testing and interviews, and the need for additional staff development and training resourcing implicit in the Schwartz Report's recommendations. However, the literature review does suggest that the sector broadly supports the Schwartz Report principles, in relation to fairness, transparency, the need to minimise barriers to participation and enhanced professionalism, even while acknowledging that there remains less consensus in relation to issues such as the most suitable assessment methods used and the balance between centralisation and decentralisation across the range of institutions.

3. Quantitative findings: Survey of institutions providing higher education (HE)

In February 2008 a survey was sent to all the HEIs, Further Education Colleges and other institutions providing higher education in the UK who were members of the UCAS database in February 2008, a total of 322 institutions. A paper-based questionnaire was sent to all institutions which also contained an address to complete the questionnaire online if respondents preferred. An email was also sent out with an electronic link to the questionnaire online. In addition one paper based reminder and two electronic reminders were sent out to non-respondents. The demographic breakdown of respondents is shown below. Over two-thirds of HEIs (70.8%) responded.

The questions used in the original Schwartz consultation were used for benchmarking purposes with the majority of questions informed by the Schwartz Report on fair admissions. To access the original Schwartz consultation questionnaire please visit <http://www.admissions-review.org.uk/consultation.html> and select Response Form.

Note: not all respondents answered each question; the number of respondents is specified in each table (N).

Table 1: Response rates by type and mode

	N	All UCAS members	% responses
Responses total:	160	322	49.6
HEI	102	144	70.8
Non-HEI	49	178	27.5
Unknown*	9		2.7

*Anonymous responses returned by e-mail without identifying their institution.

Response rates by mission group and by UK administration can be found in Appendix 5 (Tables 2 and 3).

3.1 Transparency, Achievement and Potential

Section one of the questionnaire explored issues relating to the way the admissions process is organised within institutions.

Q1 Do you consider your institution to have an admissions decision-making process that is: All handled centrally; Combination: some local, some central; all handled by school/faculty/department

- Almost half (47.5%) stated that their institution's process was a combination in which some admissions were handled locally whilst others were handled centrally (Table 4a).
- Under a quarter (20.6%) of respondents stated that all admissions were handled at a local level, i.e. by the school, faculty or department (Table 4a).
- Admissions at non-HEIs are more likely to be handled centrally (51% of non-HEIs) than in HEIs (22.5% of HEIs have purely centralised services) (Table 4a).
- Breakdowns by English institutions only, showed little difference from the total responses (a third, 33.3%, handled admissions centrally) (Table 4b).
- However, breakdowns by English HEIs only showed that admissions decision-making processes were less likely to be centralised, with 22.5% stating that all decisions were handled this way, while 58.8% stated there was a combination where some decisions were made centrally and some locally (Table 4c).

Open comments:

- There were 81 open comments, which reflected the diversity within institutions of the locality of admissions decision-makers (these are summarised in table 4d).
- One element of the open comments indicated that central admissions departments existed to ensure that procedures had been followed correctly by admissions decision-makers within departments.
- The largest group of comments focused on the centralised nature of the admissions decision-making service, with another 12 indicating they were moving towards centralisation.
- Eight reported that their admissions decision-making service was by school/department/faculty for all and another eight by school/department/faculty for some subjects.

Note: Open comments are highlighted in the text boxes throughout this chapter.

Admissions Tutors for each course make initial decision, however all rejected candidates are scrutinised centrally with the potential to overturn an admissions decision.

In some instances where applications do not meet the criteria set for centralised staff to follow, they are sent to school admissions tutors for decision-making:

Although we are fully centralised the criteria is still the remit of the School Admissions tutors, and therefore they deal with some non-standard applications.

In particular circumstances it was reported that applications with certain qualifications and also support needs would be referred to admissions decision-makers in the departments and those with support needs referred to student services/disability resource or support centre if the central admissions office decided it was necessary based on the information provided in the application:

Decisions are made centrally on all standard applications. Applicants with experiential learning or declaring a disability are also considered with the course admissions tutor (and student services in the case of disability). Those declaring criminal records are also subject to additional scrutiny.

Q2a Does your institution accept the following qualifications, have they been adopted since Schwartz and where is this information publicised (*institutional website/Prospectus/UCAS Entry Profiles*)?

- All institutions stated that they accept GCE A levels with the majority also accepting Scottish Highers, Scottish Advanced Highers, Welsh Baccalaureate, BTEC, other vocational level 3 qualifications, Access qualifications and qualifications outside the UCAS tariff. (Table 5a)
- However, these qualifications had not generally been adopted since the Schwartz Report (although the Welsh Baccalaureate was introduced after the Schwartz Report and 14.7% of respondents ticked yes for this category), many adding in the open comments that this was chronological and not as a result of the Schwartz Report's recommendations (Table 5a).

Although these qualifications are accepted for entry by the majority of institutions it is not always publicised whether or not institutions accept them on their institutional website, in the prospectus or in UCAS Entry Profiles.

- A levels receive the most publicity across all three media.
- The Welsh Baccalaureate fares the worst with under two-thirds stating whether or not this qualification is accepted on the institutional website (62.6%), just over half stating it is publicised in the prospectus (58%) and two-thirds (66%) stating it is publicised through Entry Profiles. However, this could be viewed as an area which is still developing; A levels have been established entry criteria for a much greater time period than the Welsh Baccalaureate.
- Over all three media only three-quarters of institutions in the UK publicise whether or not they accept Scottish Highers (this is 100% for institutional website and prospectus amongst Scottish HEIs but only 72% for English HEIs across these media).
- There is also a concern in the publicising of vocational qualifications; only 88.1% published on their institutional website whether or not BTEC qualifications are accepted for entry in comparison with 96.2% of those who publicise A level acceptance.
- Institutions indicated that they accepted the majority of level 3 qualification types, however they do not always publicise whether or not they accept these qualifications across the institutional website, prospectus or in Entry Profiles.
- Key differences at an institutional level are reflected in the level of publicity institutions place on the entry qualifications that can be considered. The findings show that amongst HEIs qualification requirements are generally better publicised than at non-HEIs. There is little variation however in the number of institutions either HEI or non-HEI accepting all qualification types at level 3 (Table 5b).
- International Baccalaureate was the *other* qualification identified by most respondents through open comments; 57 stated they accepted this qualification. Other European and international qualifications (including European Baccalaureate) were identified by 54 respondents (Table 5c).

Q2b Open comments: adopted since the Schwartz Report?

Of the 22 respondents most (18) reported that changes had been adopted because of new qualifications rather than as a direct consequence of the Schwartz Report. A further two stated it

was specifically to account for new 14-19 Diplomas and one respondent advised it was driven more by the UCAS Tariff than the Schwartz Report.

We feel we have acted quickly and responsibly to the development of the new Diplomas in order to help prospective Diploma students make appropriate choices for their 14-19 education.

The UCAS tariff I would say has been the driving force behind the acceptance of qualifications.

Q2c Do any of your courses identify subjects/qualifications at level 3 that you prefer not to consider, and where is this publicised?

- Respondents in 15% of institutions stated that there were some A level subjects that would not be accepted for certain courses, this also applied to other vocational courses at level 3 (14.3%) and BTEC courses (10.6%) (Table 6a).
- Of those who said they preferred not to accept certain qualifications there was quite a variation in whether this was publicised or not. The publicising of information about A levels was much more transparent than for other types of qualifications (Table 6a).
- Of those who stated that they prefer not to accept other vocational level 3 qualifications, only half (50%) publicise this on the institutional website. Slightly more (58.8%) publicise this on Entry Profiles.
- The 1994 Group and the Russell Group were most likely to identify subjects/qualifications at level 3 that they preferred not to consider (Table 6b).
- Of the 23 respondents who commented on the other qualifications that the institution prefers **not** to consider the most (11) stated General Studies, six referred to having subject specific reservations about some subjects, the remainder stated:
 - Critical Thinking at A level 2
 - any City and Guilds below level 4 1
 - vocational level 3 qualifications for some academic subjects 1

Equal consideration is given to the full range of academic and vocational qualifications including other skills and expertise which can be taken into consideration such as work experience or vocational training.

Space restrictions limit named qualifications to the common ones, then we say -' or other appropriate qualifications or experience' - we use the UCAS UK Qualifications publication as our main guidance on suitability, this runs to 68 pages!

Q3a What other entry criteria do you use for admissions decisions, has this been newly adopted since the Schwartz Report and where is this information publicised?

Over 94% of responses stated the following were used at some level, although not necessarily newly adopted since the Schwartz Report (Table 7a):

- references
- individual interviews
- personal statements
- relevant experience
- work experience/skills
- admissions tests were used by 45% of institutions. Amongst those who answered whether or not this criterion was publicised on the institutional website, almost half (48.6%) stated 'yes', 21.9% indicated that it was sometimes publicised. Slightly fewer stated it was publicised in the prospectus (44.1%) and fewer still through Entry Profiles (39%).
- entry criteria are more likely to be publicised on the institutional website or the prospectus than in Entry Profiles (Table 7a).

The breakdown of responses by mission group also reflected the above with the University Alliance, Million+ and Guild HE institutions more likely to use personal development factors, group interviews and Accreditation of Prior Experimental Learning (APEL) than other groups (Table 7b).

Open comments: Other entry requirements

Other entry requirements used for admissions decision-making were reported by 29 institutions. Most responses (9) related to auditions, portfolios (8) and tests for certain subjects (2), while six cited academic background as expressed via predicted grades.

For a small number of particular courses we may limit acceptability of NVQ level 3 and request additional evidence/preparation prior to admission.

Some Departments do exclude particular subjects at A Level (i.e. General Studies). Where this is the case this information is published in our prospectus and on our website and Entry Profiles.

Some vocational courses are not accepted for some academic courses but these applicants are considered on an individual basis.

Open comments: Revised practices reported as a result of the Schwartz Report include:

- admissions procedures and processes revised to meet the recommendations;
- formalised APEL procedure and criteria;
- have ASDAN under consideration;
- interviews introduced for some courses and processes informed, for instance clear guidelines issued to interviewers and they are now arranged centrally;
- updated requirements for individual programmes changed;
- encourage ASDAN qualifications and look forward to SPA's good practice in interviewing guide;
- generic entry requirements reviewed in light of the Schwartz Report and QAA Code of Practice

Admissions procedures and processes have been revised to meet the recommendations of the Schwartz Report.

Group interviews have been introduced for some subject areas where interactive sessions indicate potential for the subject e.g. Drama.

Q4 Do you attach weighting to different entry criteria and are these weightings publicised?

- More HEIs than non-HEIs attach weighting to entry criteria, 30 HEIs and two non-HEIs answered yes or sometimes (Table 8a).
- It is more likely that HEIs attach weightings for *some* courses, 21.9% responded that this is the case (Table 8a).
- Very few FE Colleges publicised weightings and then only sometimes.
- Russell Group and University Alliance institutions were more likely to attach weightings to different entry criteria than the other mission groups (Table 8b).

Q5 What information about undergraduate courses can applicants access through Entry Profiles?

Entry Profiles were introduced to ensure that the information available to applicants across the sector is more transparent and presented in one place in a similar way. They should include the details of what is required for entry, such as qualifications, grades, admissions tests, interview,

questionnaire etc. together with features about the course and details of the admissions process². Respondents stated that the most common information to be found in Entry Profiles was other information (see paragraph below for details) and academic entry requirements, (91.3%) (Table 9a).

Applicant profiles are most likely to be detailed by University Alliance institutions; non academic entry requirements are most likely to be detailed by GuildHE; and details of the admissions decision-making process are most likely to be detailed by institutions in the 1994 Group (Table 9b).

Other information that undergraduate applicants can access through Entry Profiles

Among the specific types of information listed in Entry Profiles, eight respondents highlighted the following: careers information and course content (four each); bursaries and scholarship, accommodation and learning resources (two each); and one reference each for information on modules; assessment; teaching facilities; skills development; financial summary; student support; open days; interviews; criminal conviction checks; mature and international students; entry statistics; advice on writing personal statements; and guidance for referees.

Lots of other information available on the Entry Profiles, e.g. course information, information for mature and international applicants, entry statistics, link to Departmental Admissions Statement, help on completing the personal statement, guidance for referees, etc.

Q6 Do you use any of the following personal contextual information to inform individual admissions decisions and where is it publicised?

- For the majority of undergraduate courses personal contextual information (i.e. first-generation HE applicant; disability; long-term illness; attending a low-achieving school; looked-after children; and family problems) does not inform individual decisions (Table 10a).
- Of the specific personal contextual information stated in the responses to this question, information regarding long-term illness was the most likely to be used in the admissions process, with 22.9% stating that it would be used to inform individual admissions decisions with a further 25.5% stating it is sometimes used (Table 10a).
- However, under certain circumstances institutions are only slightly less likely to have responded to both 'yes' and 'sometimes' as they are 'no'; for example long-term illness (48.4%) and family problems (45.7%).

² A study conducted by SPA in 2007 found that from a sample of 2,596 students, 94% of home students and 96% of international students stated that Entry Profiles were either extremely helpful or helpful within the application process.

- In the majority of cases respondents stated that the decision either to use, not use or sometimes use, personal contextual information had not been newly adopted since the Schwartz Report.
- With the exception of disability, whether personal contextual information is used to inform individual admissions decision-making is not well publicised across institutional websites, prospectuses or Entry Profiles. Of all three publicity vehicles, institutional websites are most likely and Entry Profiles are least likely to carry this information.
- Russell Group institutions were the most likely of the mission groups to state 'yes' they consider personal contextual information to inform admissions decisions across all the factors identified in the survey (Table 10b).
- GuildHE were most likely to state 'no' they did not consider personal contextual information to inform admissions decisions across all the factors identified in the survey (Table 10b).

Open comments:

Additional comments about the publication of contextual information were made by 54 institutions, of which 12 referred to widening participation activities such as summer schools and Aimhigher activities. Five reported that all cases would be considered on an individual basis, another three reported that they would select on academic criteria only.

Information on disability, illness and family problems are taken into account only at confirmation.

We invite information on contextual factors but have recently amended our internal code of practice to make clear that any adjustments to admissions criteria must be evidence based.

Q7 Do you use any information sources other than the application form to gather information about potential students?

- Just over half of the institutions (51.6%) stated that they use information sources other than the UCAS application (Table 11a).
- Over half (55.9%) of HEIs stated that they use information sources other than the application form to gather information about potential students (Table 11a).
- The open comments identified sources including: all the information supplied by the applicant (19); workshop/audition/interview (14 responses).

- Of the mission groups Million+ was least likely (80% stated no) and 1994 Group most likely (85.7% stated yes) to use information sources other than the application form to gather information about potential students (Table 11b).

Open comments: Information sources

We look at the students' desire to learn, their enthusiasm for the subject, their ability to benefit from doing the course, and what their future career plans are.

Ability to successfully complete and positively benefit from the course as identified through literature/workshop/audition.

A dedicated form which applicants may choose to submit to provide additional information about their circumstances should they wish to do so.

Data on average school performance from DCSF (English schools), HEFCE POLAR [Participation of Local Areas] data for low participation areas, own records of summer school attendance.

Q8 Which of the following selection criteria do your admissions decision-makers consider?

- Almost all admissions decision-makers use predicted academic achievement (91.1%) and previous academic experience at level 3 (94.9%) (Table 12).
- 86.7% of admissions decision-makers use previous academic achievement at level 2 and over a quarter (28.5%) use unit grade data (Table 12).

Open Comments on selection criteria

Unit grade information is considered by a very small number of departments at confirmation stage to assess 'near misses'.

All of the information provided on the UCAS application as well as any the applicant additionally sends to the admissions unit.

Q9 If you have adopted new practices in selection criteria since Schwartz please provide details.

- There were 29 comments overall, of which one institution reported that changes were in place prior to the Schwartz Report.
- Six respondents reported that all admissions practices and procedures were revised to meet the recommendations of the Schwartz Report.
- Among specific changes introduced, six reported that they had enhanced or introduced transparency, five reported that they now consider applications more holistically and in context, four made changes to make the system more centralised, four to enhance feedback and two institutions reported that they were in the process of phasing out interviews for most courses.

Admissions Tutors have been encouraged to consider the whole application form and consider carefully factors such as applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds; poor performing schools; those who have struggled with difficult family circumstances or personal or family illness.

The major change has been the increased professionalisation of the admissions process through the centralisation of selection and the adoption of departmental admissions templates for all subjects. Interviews for non-creative courses have been phased out, but kept for mature applicants.

The UCAS tariff has been adopted and is used by nearly all courses. Admissions criteria have been written down and decisions are made by trained admissions staff in accordance with the admissions criteria.

Q10 What methods does your institution employ to monitor and evaluate the reliability and validity of admissions decision-making methods?

- A variety of measurements were employed to monitor and evaluate the admissions decision-making methods in institutions. The most popular was through the monitoring of course performance (94.1%) – this could have been interpreted as students’ progression on the course, retention rates or students’ performance - followed by other internal quality processes (89.6%) (Table 13).
- The least likely method was benchmarking although over half (59.2%) were employing this method.
- Of the 12 institutions that commented: three institutions reported external input through assessment or examination; seven reported some kind of internal review either of individual cases, all cases or through review by central and faculty level inspection; two reported annual events to monitor or discuss practices and review cases.

Q11a Does your institution have its own code of practice on admissions?

HEIs (68.3%) were more likely than non-HEIs (31.7%) to have their own code of practice on admissions.

Q11b How is the code of practice/policy monitored?

- The highest proportion of respondents stated that the policy is monitored by central committee (73.3%).
- Only 4.6% stated that they did not monitor the policy.

Through the open comments it was identified that monitoring of admissions policy was more widespread than the statistics from the survey illustrated. A number of institutions stated that they carried out a number, rather than one, of these practices. Of the 40 comments overall:

- eight reported that the admissions code/ policy is monitored by the admissions team or Head of Admissions;
- eight that it was by central committee and external audit;
- seven by central committee, external audit *and* within department/school/faculty, one of which also used MATRIX Accreditation and QAA;
- and six by central committee and within department/school/faculty.

3.2 Minimising the barriers to application

Q12a Does your institution use monitoring data to inform and update admissions policy?

- There was a high usage of monitoring data to inform and update admissions policy, over half of respondents stated that they use data (institution's own data, UCAS data, other national data sets, institutional student experience data and the National Student Survey) for monitoring *all* courses (Table 14).
- Institutions were most likely (81.5%) to use the institution's own data to inform and update admissions policy for all courses.
- The National Student Survey was used by 76.3% of respondents at either all or some course level.

- Almost a third of respondents (30.7%) stated that they did not use other national data sets (i.e. excluding UCAS or National Student Survey) for this purpose.

Q12b If you use data, how frequently is it used?

- Data is used frequently to update and inform admissions policy, over half (59.7%) use data on an annual basis for this purpose.
- A smaller proportion of respondents use data more frequently, 11.8% on a weekly basis.
- Of those who responded to 'other', 14 reported that it depended on requirements and could be weekly to annually; two reported that it was done on a termly basis and one reported that it was annual. One reported that it was fortnightly; another that it was at least monthly.

Q13 Do your admissions decision-making staff interact with the widening participation project team?

Respondents were asked about the nature and frequency of work with which their admissions decision-making staff were engaged. There were very high levels of engagement in all the activities asked about, either at a regular or occasional frequency; few respondents stated that they never engaged in these activities (Table 15a).

The responses indicated:

- a high level of interaction between the admissions decision-making staff and staff involved in widening participation. This was both through the development of projects with the widening participation team and via the practice of sharing of admissions data;
- a majority statement that this was not something that had been newly adopted since the Schwartz Report;
- that institutions in the Russell Group were most likely to *regularly*: develop projects with the widening participation team; share admissions data with the widening participation team; take part in outreach work; target under-represented groups and target post-application (Table 15b);
- that institutions in the University Alliance were most likely to regularly target pre-application (66.7%).

Q14a Has the degree of centralisation of your admissions department changed since the Schwartz Report?

Of those indicating a change since the Schwartz Report, 33.5% said admissions had become more centralised, for HEIs this percentage was 45% more centralised (Table 16a).

Q14b If yes, please indicate why it has changed?

General changes in the HE sector were cited by two thirds of respondents (66%) stating that this was the reason for change. Nearly 37% of respondents indicated that the publication of the Schwartz Report was the reason for this change (Table 16b).

Q15 Does the same line manager manage the admissions and widening participation/access staff?

Over half (62%) of respondents stated that the same line manager did not have responsibility for the line management of both the admissions and widening participation staff. Joint responsibility was most common in the 1994 Group (64.3%) and the Russell Group institutions (53.3%, Table 17).

Q16 What is the highest level committee at which admissions policy is decided in your institution?

- The highest level committee at which admissions policy is decided in an institution was most likely to be the executive group at nearly 65.8%.
- Fewer than 10% of respondents reported that it was decided within the department/school/faculty.

Q17 Has your admissions service increased the amount of staff development and training in the following areas and how important are these issues?

There has been a general pattern of increased amounts of staff development across several of the areas identified; the highest increase was reported across four areas, which were also identified as most important (Table 18):

- equal opportunities (88.2%)
- awareness of new vocational qualifications (83.8%)
- awareness of QAA Code of Practice on Admissions (80.5%)
- awareness of barriers to participation in higher education (78.3%)

Open comments:

Of the open comments three institutions spoke generally about the level of training across the board. Eight reported on specific training to meet needs, such as disability awareness, data protection, Freedom of Information Act, new qualifications, criminal records bureau checks, customer care, team working and mature students. Six respondents referred to the Schwartz Report recommendations; one mentioned the UCAS CPD programme. There were some issues raised about the resource intensiveness of staff development opportunities and one comment from an FE college who felt staff development had to be sought out on an individual basis and was not supported by management. A number of respondents stated that staff development was an ongoing process and pre-dated the Schwartz Report.

Currently, the HE Admissions service is struggling to maintain its day to day level of service to its applicants and its internal, academic colleagues due to staff shortages. We appreciate the need for staff development and training in the above areas and will endeavour to work towards this when we have the personnel and the basic training in place.

We aim to ensure that admissions staff have the required amount of training and are provided the appropriate level of support on an ongoing basis. However, this is very resource intensive and academic staff have little time to spare. To counter this, we are disseminating increasing amounts of information by email.

The responses to Question 18: *'Please rate on a scale of not at all important to very important the following potentially significant barriers to the implementation of the Schwartz recommendations for your institution and for the HE sector in general'* were not analysed due to different interpretations in the meaning of the question.

3.3. The Institution's view

In this section of the survey the questions that were asked in the Schwartz Group's consultation 2004 were repeated in order to explore whether there has been any change in the way institutions perceive fair admissions.

Q19a Do you think that it is important that universities and colleges have students from a wide range of backgrounds?

Almost all institutions agreed that this was an important issue which saw a two percentage point increase since 2004 (Table 19a below).

Table 19a

		Yes		No		Not sure		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Schwartz 2004*	All	149	96	4	3	2	1	155	100
2008 Schwartz Review	All	157	98.1	0	0	3	1.9	160	100
	Non-HEIs	49	100	0	0	0	0	49	100
	HEIs	99	97.1	0	0	3	2.9	102	100

*This consultation included a number of bodies in addition to colleges and HEIs (Connexions, FE Colleges, Independent Schools, Individual, Not given, Other agencies/associations, Other HE institutions, Schools with Sixth Form, Schools without Sixth Form, Sixth Form Colleges, Students Union, Trade Unions, Universities, Others). The figures presented here are the results returned by FE Colleges, other HE institutions and Universities.

The mission group analysis showed that the majority of institutions felt that it was an important issue, although a small proportion in the Million+ and Russell Group stated 'not sure' (Table 19b).

Q19b Open comments:

Of the 61 open comments, 41 were supportive of diversity as a goal in itself, six referred to their specific widening participation missions, three more were supportive but with a caveat about academic integrity and standards, six welcomed diversity but only if standards are maintained, one referred to 50% overseas student intake as an indicator of diversity.

A range of backgrounds allows for diversity and enhances the student experience as students learn from each other.

Having students from a diverse range of backgrounds - social, racial, cultural, age and geographical are all valued for the input they have to the courses they attend. They are equally as well valued for the less measurable benefits achieved from social interactions.

Higher education should be available for any person who is suitably qualified to continue studying, regardless of any personal or external influences, and who has the potential to achieve the best of the individuals' ability.

Q19c If yes, should universities and colleges choose students partly in order to achieve such a mix?

- A large proportion, particularly of HEIs (60.4%) stated 'no'. This showed an increase in those stating 'no' since 2004 (Table 19c below).

Table 19c

		Yes		No		Not sure		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Schwartz 2004	All	71	48	53	36	24	16	148	100
2008 Schwartz Review	All	23	15	85	55.6	45	29.4	153	100
	Non-HEIs	7	14.6	20	41.7	21	43.8	48	100
	HEIs	15	15.6	58	60.4	23	24	96	100

- Those in GuildHE and the Russell Group were most likely to state that universities and colleges choose students partly in order to achieve such a mix (Table 19d).

Open comments: should universities and colleges choose students partly in order to achieve such a mix?

There were 80 open comment responses of which:

- 20 institutions reported that ability, motivation and potential to thrive should be the overriding criteria for selection;
- Four others said that, in addition, institutions should try to widen opportunity for underrepresented groups by offering different courses, i.e. vocational, by taking prior experience into account and by removing barriers for applicants;
- Nineteen institutions reported that widening participation activities and policies were the way to ensure a greater mix of applicants to HE; four that believed ability, motivation and potential were the major criteria also believed in the need for widening participation policies to widen the social mix of applicants;
- Four others believed that widening participation was important but in the context of 'no social engineering';
- Nine respondents argued against the idea of social engineering, positive discrimination and quotas;
- Two more argued that preserving academic integrity should be the paramount criterion, not social mixing;
- One institution reported that its rural location would make social mixing difficult;
- Five institutions reported that fairness through the application of institution-wide policies (rather than considering applicants on an individual basis) would ensure a fair social mix;

- Four reported the view that all applications should be judged on their individual merits;

Applicants are considered individually and decisions made when all information and facts are to hand. The potential to achieve is the over-riding consideration and applicants should not be "set up to fail" in order to satisfy generalised ideas that everyone should be given places in HE institutions.

Do not select students to achieve a mix. Instead we aim to widen our application pool in order to present Admissions Tutors with a wider diversity of applicants. Admissions Tutors will then select applicants in accordance with our selection criteria.

Awareness of Widening Participation, the differing needs, expectations and abilities of applicants is vital to ensure recruitment across a wide range of backgrounds. But only if they meet the academic and 'preparedness to study' criteria.

Diversity of students is important for the intrinsic benefits to the university community, and to ensure that universities fulfil their role in promoting social inclusion by making higher education accessible to all who have the academic potential to succeed.

Widening participation is an important strategic objective for the institution and we are committed to widening access to higher education by welcoming and encouraging more applications from groups who are under-represented in higher education. The fair admissions agenda is difficult to distinguish from broader fair access.

Q20 Is it fair for a university or college to make a lower offer to some applicants than to other applicants for the same course, for these reasons?

Almost half (49.7%) of institutions felt that it was not fair for a university or college to make a lower offer to some applicants than to other applicants on the basis of achieving a mixed student body. In comparing the 2004 results with those of this review of the Schwartz Report in 2008 there has been a significant change in opinion, in 2004 three-quarters of respondents (76%) stated it was fair compared with 28.5% in 2008 (Table 20 below).

Table 20

		Yes		No		Not Sure		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Schwartz 2004	All	113	76	20	13	16	11	149	100
2008 Schwartz Review	All	43	28.5	75	49.7	33	21.9	151	100
	Non-HEI's	7	15.2	26	56.5	13	28.3	46	100
	HEIs	35	36.1	43	44.3	19	19.6	97	100

Open comments:

Of the 76 open comments, 55 respondents said it would be allowed for a variety of reasons relating to context such as: nature of the school; social class; illness; if applicants had participated in widening participation activities with the HE provider; and at Clearing. These factors were rationalised on social justice and fairness grounds so long as the rationale was fair and evidence-based within a framework of rules. Eighteen respondents were against this on the basis of equity, fairness or to avoid social engineering. Three institutions reported that it was not an issue for them.

From an institutional perspective, our flexible admissions policies and widening participation initiatives provide, in most areas such a mix. We do not need to "socially engineer" decisions at the individual level.

If University policy is to achieve diversity, then policy and practice should reflect this aim. In these circumstances differential selection is as justifiable as selection using any other criteria for entry.

If yes, it would be social engineering which is not the purpose of a university.

Implicitly widening participation and institutional strategies foster engagement at a widening participation level through for example progression via agreements with local Aimhigher schools and colleges. HEIs should be empowered and encouraged to admit students which reflect its own stated strategies and its local and regional agenda.

Q21a Should an applicant's educational context, for example, type and nature of the school or college attended, be considered in admissions?

Over half of HEI respondents felt that an applicant's educational context should be considered in admissions. Of all respondents 41% felt that it should be considered, however, this was a decrease in this opinion since 2004, where almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) felt that this information should be considered (Table 21a below).

Table 21a

		Yes		No		Not sure		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Schwartz 2004	All	99	65	31	20	22	14	152	99
2008 Schwartz Review	All	64	41	59	37.8	33	21.2	156	100
	Non-HEIs	10	20.8	27	56.3	11	22.9	48	100
	HEIs	51	51.5	27	27.3	21	21.2	99	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

Of the 156 institutions that answered this question 99 were HEIs, 48 were non-HEIs and the remaining nine did not specify institution type.

On occasion it may be appropriate to make an offer without placing the same emphasis on previous academic achievement but the conditions of the offer should be standard. In borderline cases in August, it is possible to take a range of factors into account.

All offers are made at the minimum level, but this is currently under review. Progression rate to higher education from a school is considered where possible, but the fact of a school being in the state or independent sector in itself should not be a factor.

The influence of educational disadvantage on academic achievement at level 3 is widely understood in the sector. In cases where the University believes that an individual's lower relative performance, as a consequence of such circumstances, would not affect their ability to benefit from our courses, an appropriate offer is made.

We agree this information should inform admissions decisions, however, we would not wish to see this information used in an isolated or mechanistic fashion. The decision to make an offer should be informed by this data alongside other indicators of potential.

Q21b If so, should this extend to offering a place to an applicant with a lower offer than those required of other applicants, based on consideration of these factors?

The proportion of respondents who stated that this should extend to offering an applicant a lower offer than those required of other applicants, decreased by 18 percentage points since 2004 when 55% of respondents felt that this was the case (compared with 37.5% in 2008) (Table 21b below).

Table 21b

		Yes		No		Not sure		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Schwartz 2004	All	77	55	34	24	30	21	141	100
2008 Schwartz Review	All	42	37.5	42	37.5	28	25	112	100
	Non-HEIs	6	20	12	40	12	40	30	100
	HEIs	34	44.7	26	34.2	16	21.1	76	100

Q22a Is it desirable or necessary to consider additional measures of assessment in admissions outside of specific measures? (Such as portfolios for creative arts courses or auditions for performing arts courses)

Almost all respondents felt that it is desirable or necessary to consider additional measures of assessment in admissions outside of specific measures (such as portfolios for creative arts courses or auditions for performing arts courses). This was an increase on those who agreed in 2004. It was an issue that was more important for those in HEIs than it was for those in non-HEIs (Table 22a below).

Table 22a

		Yes		No		Not sure		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Schwartz 2004	All	133	88	9	6	10	7	152	100
2008 Schwartz Review	All	143	91.7	1	0.6	12	7.7	156	100
	Non-HEIs	40	81.6	1	2	8	16.3	49	100
	HEIs	94	95.9	0	0	4	4.1	98	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

Interviews were the most popular form of additional assessment with 98.6% of respondents stating that this method should be used (Table 22b below).

Table 22b If yes, should the following be used as an additional means of assessment?

		Yes		No		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Interviews	Review of Schwartz 2008	144	98.6	2	1.4	146	100
	Schwartz 2004	120	91	12	9	132	100
Compact, progression or articulation arrangements	Review of Schwartz 2008	99	78.6	27	21.4	126	100
	Schwartz 2004	108	82	24	18	132	100
Taking school performance into account	Review of Schwartz 2008	94	77	28	23	122	100
	Schwartz 2004	100	75	33	25	133	100
Taking personal and contextual factors into account	Review of Schwartz 2008	114	85.1	20	14.9	134	100
	Schwartz 2004	94	75	32	25	126	100
Earning credit through additional preparatory programmes	Review of Schwartz 2008	98	78.4	27	21.6	125	100
	Schwartz 2004	116	87	17	13	133	100
Admissions tests (Schwartz asked about additional testing)	Review of Schwartz 2008	81	61.8	50	38.2	131	100
	Schwartz 2004	71	54	60	46	131	100
Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)	Review of Schwartz 2008	127	92.7	10	7.3	137	100
	Schwartz 2004	121	91	12	9	133	100
Using GCSE grades more explicitly	Review of Schwartz 2008	84	71.2	34	28.8	118	100
	Schwartz 2004	79	59	56	41	135	100

Q22c Please add any further comments about changes you have implemented as a result of the Schwartz Report recommendations

There were a total of 63 responses to the invitation to add any final further comments relating to changes implemented as a result of the Schwartz Report recommendations. The main groupings of comments indicated that ongoing reviews of admissions are taking place at least partly in response to the Schwartz Report (11 comments) and that the Schwartz Report and the QAA code of practice have raised the profile of admissions (17 comments). One institution noted that:

“Following the publication of the Schwartz Report, we undertook an 18 month-long review of our admissions processes which culminated in the following key recommendations:

- 1. the centralisation of undergraduate admissions decisions;*
- 2. the development of a comprehensive admissions policy;*

3. *the improvement of the quality and extent of applicant information, and better dissemination of it (central and departmental websites, prospectus, course brochures and Entry Profiles);*
4. *the implementation of a review of the training received by admissions staff.*

We feel that we have made significant progress in most of these areas since the Schwartz Report.”

Others chose to highlight the raising of the profile of admissions as a result of the Schwartz Report:

“A comprehensive review of undergraduate recruitment and admissions is currently underway at the University. Recommendations to improve structures, policy and processes are being implemented across the institution to enhance the fairness, transparency and consistency of the University’s admissions policy and practice in line with The Schwartz Report and other changes to the external environment.

Review of admissions process has led to administrative and systems change, for example the centralisation of international admissions decision-making. Admissions has moved up the agenda and now lies within the remit of the key university committee overseeing undergraduate quality/standards and course validation and monitoring; as a result, there is greater awareness of admissions issues at executive level in the University. [There is] ...better integration of widening participation activities, for example a review and rebranding of our Passport to HE programme.”

Transparency and professionalism, enhanced by clarity and centralised decision-making, was the major concern for several institutions:

“Our main change has been to thoroughly review our internal and external admission policy statement to ensure clarity and accessibility. We have also changed and expanded our admissions staff training arrangements. We are considering further centralisation of decision-making.

However, many other institutions noted that ongoing policy development would have happened regardless of the Schwartz Report (16 comments). A typical comment of this type was:

“I do not believe we have implemented any changes as a result of the Schwartz Report recommendations. Our admissions policy was fully ‘Schwartz compliant’ already. It has evolved

to take account of changes in the educational landscape since the Schwartz Report but this would have happened anyway.”

One selective institution noted the link to market pressure:

“Due largely to the pressure on places and demands from unsuccessful applicants, this University was already well down the line towards principles similar to those advocated by the Schwartz Report by the time the review was undertaken. Prior to the Schwartz Report, we had already appointed professional admissions administrators to take decisions on the majority of our applications. Academics remain involved for only a small number of professionally-oriented programmes including medicine, veterinary medicine and teacher education.”

Other comments noted the impact of SPA on good practice and professionalism. Several comments mentioned the issue of contextual factors but there was no emerging consensus view on their use (reflecting the survey findings above). One noted that:

“Contextual factors have always been used in selection. However, the Schwartz Report has encouraged a more systematic application of this policy and more transparency in doing so, to applicants and other stakeholders.”

Another noted that:

“We would welcome further discussion and consensus in the sector about the appropriateness and means of using contextual data in admissions decisions. The complexities that were outlined in the Schwartz Report regarding the difficulties of assessing disadvantage, its impact upon an individual applicant's academic attainment, and its relevance to their potential to succeed in HE are still unresolved.”

4. Quantitative findings: Desk-testing survey of HE providers' web-based course pages

4.1 Introduction

This section contains the findings from a desk-based review of institutions' web-based admissions information by sampling course information pages. This element of the research was designed specifically to enable the team to make an assessment of the transparency and consistency of institutions' admissions structures and processes by simulating the experience of prospective applicants researching choices.

4.2 Methodology

The research desk-tested all UK state funded HEIs and a sample of the larger FE institutions. The research team interrogated admissions web pages in two subject areas at each HEI and one subject area at each non-HEI. The method chosen to select a fair sample of full time undergraduate courses (degrees and HND) on offer at each institution was to use course information pages <http://www.ucas.com/instit/index.html> to identify the largest and smallest recruiting subject areas from which to select a course. In colleges (i.e. non-HEIs) offering a narrower range of provision a course was chosen at random from the largest recruiting subject area.

The rationale for this course sampling methodology was to capture something of the range of subject areas on offer and to test the consistency as well as the transparency of information offered to potential applicants. A purely random or a representative sample of subject areas were discounted as it was thought these methods might not capture the range or specific nature of each institution's offer.

Findings were analysed from 201 institutions (139 HEIs and 62 non-HEIs) which were interrogated during April and May 2008.

Appendix 6 details the full methodology for this element of the research with details of institution and course selection criteria (Tables 23 to 29).

4.3 Findings

(i) The number of ‘mouse clicks’ from home page to course page.

In the following tables the terms ‘Course 1’ and ‘Course 2’ are used. Course 1 is taken from the largest subject area at the institution, as defined by the number of acceptances at each of the 201 institutions as given on course information pages. Course 2 is taken from the smallest subject area and is also only taken from HEIs. This means that Course 1 can be taken to indicate the largest recruiting subject areas of an institution and Course 2 the lowest (for HEIs only).

Table 30 Number of clicks to course page from home page, by course 1 and course 2

No. of clicks	C1	%	C2	%	Total	%
2	2	1	1	1	3	1
3	16	8	9	6	25	7
4	82	40	49	34	131	38
5	62	31	46	32	108	31
6	28	14	29	20	57	16
7	5	2	2	1	7	2
8+	5	3	3	4	12	3
Grand Total	200	99	139	98	343	98

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- 77% of course pages are found in five clicks or fewer
- 8% in three or fewer clicks.

(ii) Usability

This section measures usability from applicants' perspectives by analysing institutions' website course pages.

Table 31 Where found ... Entry Requirements by course 1 and 2

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	147	100	247	72
new page specific	30	25	55	16
new page generic	13	8	21	6
not found	11	6	17	6
Grand Total	201	139	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- In almost three-quarters of cases entry requirements were found on the actual course page
- 22% were found on pages linked to the course page
- Entry requirements were not found at all on 6% of course pages (Table 31 above).

Table 32 Where found ... UCAS tariff points by course 1 and 2

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	93	61	154	45
new page specific	21	15	36	10
new page generic	2	2	4	1
not found	85	61	146	44
Grand Total	201	139	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- UCAS Tariff points were found on course pages in 45% of cases
- In 11% of other cases they were found on pages linked from the course page
- In 44% of cases UCAS Tariff point equivalences were not found on course pages or linked to course pages (Table 32 above).

It should be noted that as a matter of policy many HEIs do not choose to use UCAS Tariff points to express entry requirements or offers.

Table 33 Where found ... UCAS Tariff points by type, course 1 & 2 combined

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
on page	138	49	22	35	160	46
new page specific	33	12	3	5	36	10
new page generic	4	1	-	-	4	1
not found	103	40	35	60	140	42
Grand Total	278	102	60	100	340	99

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Table 33 above shows that HEIs are more likely to have UCAS Tariff points information on or linked to the course page than non-HEIs.

Table 34 Where found ... Equivalent qualifications by course 1 and 2

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	112	72	184	53
new page specific	38	24	62	18
new page generic	24	22	46	13
not found	27	21	48	15
Grand Total	201	139	340	99

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Information on equivalent qualifications was found either on the course pages (53% of cases) or linked via the course pages to new pages generic or specific (31%) in 84% of cases (Table 34 above)
- Analysis by institution type reveals that this information cannot be found from the course pages in 11% of HEI cases (Table 35 below).

Table 35 Where found ... Equivalent qualifications by course 1 and 2 by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
on page	145	52	39	63	184	54
new page specific	57	20	5	8	62	18
new page generic	46	16	-	-	46	13
not found	30	11	18	29	48	15
Grand Total	278	99	62	100	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Information on whether or not interviews were required for the course was found on only a minority of course pages (26% on the page with a further 9% on specific linked pages and 7% on generic linked pages, Table 36 below)
- Analysis by type shows that the percentage of 'not found' was slightly higher among HEIs which probably reflects the subject area (Table 37 below)
- Much the same picture is found in relation to statements about whether applicants may be expected to undergo tests, show their portfolios or have an audition which is also mentioned only in a minority of cases (15%, Tables 38, 39 below)
- Unfortunately it is not possible to cross-tabulate the analysis in Tables 36, 37, 38 and 39 with subject areas where interviews and/or tests/portfolios/auditions are more common (i.e. art and design, medicine) as statements stating exclusively that an interview or test was required were not identified; a statement to the effect that 'interviews are not required' on a humanities course would be recorded in this data.

Table 36 Where found ... Interview by course 1 and 2

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	57	32	89	26
new page specific	18	12	30	9
new page generic	15	9	24	7
not found	111	86	197	58
Grand Total	201	139	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

Table 37 Where found ... Interview by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
on page	65	23	24	39	89	26
new page specific	29	10	1	2	30	9
new page generic	21	7	3	5	24	7
not found	163	59	34	55	197	58
Grand Total	278	99	62	101	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

Table 38 Where found ... Test/Portfolio/Audition

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	38	14	52	15
new page specific	12	10	22	6
new page generic	7	4	11	3
not found	144	111	255	75
Grand Total	201	139	340	99

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

Table 39 Where found ... Test/Portfolio/Audition by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
on page	31	8	21	34	52	15
new page specific	19	7	3	5	22	6
new page generic	9	3	2	2	11	3
not found	219	79	36	60	255	75
Grand Total	278	97	62	101	340	99*

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

Table 40 Where found ... Previous Experience references

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	28	22	50	15
new page specific	11	8	19	5
new page generic	8	5	13	4
not found	154	104	258	76
Grand Total	201	139	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- References to previous experience are also not valid for all subject areas and this is reflected in the fact that such references were not found in three-quarters of cases
- Where previous experience is found it is most often on the course information page (15% of all cases)
- References to previous experience are found on a specific new page or a generic new page (in 9% of cases, Table 40 above).

Table 41 Where found ... Previous Experience by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
on page	39	14	11	18	50	15
new page specific	19	7	-	-	19	5
new page generic	10	3	3	5	13	4
not found	210	75	48	77	258	76
Grand Total	278	99	62	100	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- There is very little variation by type of institution (Table 41 above).

Table 42 Where found ... Equality references

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	7	7	14	4
new page specific	9	5	14	4
new page generic	41	26	67	20
not found	144	101	245	72
Grand Total	201	139	340	100*

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Equality references were designed to record where information on equality or equal opportunities in relation to applications for disabled students for this particular course can be found (or not found)
- Almost three-quarters of cases do not have this information on course pages
- A further 20% have a link to a generic page which holds this information (Tables 42 above, 43 below).

Table 43 Where found ... Equality reference by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
on page	9	3	5	8	14	4
new page specific	12	4	2	3	14	4
new page generic	52	19	15	24	67	20
not found	205	74	40	64	245	72
Grand Total	278	100	62	99	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Overall non-HEIs are slightly more likely than HEIs to have equality references.

Table 44 Where found ... Applicant profile

	C1	C2	Total	Overall %
on page	7	8	15	4
new page specific	4	3	7	2
new page generic	11	5	16	5
not found	179	123	302	89
Grand Total	201	139	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

Table 45 Where found ... Applicant profile by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
on page	13	5	2	3	15	4
new page specific	7	2			7	2
new page generic	14	5	2	3	16	5
not found	244	88	58	93	302	89
Grand Total	278	100	62	99	340	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Few institutions' course pages contained information in the form of applicant profiles
- 4% have applicant profiles on the page with a further 7% on new pages (generic or specific)
- In 89% of cases applicant profiles were not found (Tables 44, 45 above).

(iii) Admissions Policy statements

In this context Admissions Policy statements are defined as web-based statements that relate to how institutions outline their policies, practices and procedures for the applications and admissions decision-making process. They could for example be found as part of institutional mission statements, as stand-alone documents or as part of a student handbook or quality manual. This part of the desk-testing exercise was concerned with two main issues: how easily such statements were found, and what they contained. The researchers noted that 11 websites did not offer an A-Z facility or a search facility to find admissions policy statements.

Table 46 Where found ... Admissions Policy

	Total	Overall %
via course page	41	20
via home page	56	28
not found	104	52
Grand Total	201	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Admissions policies were found via links from the course pages in 20% of cases
- Admissions policies were found via links from the institution's home page in a further 28% of cases
- Admissions policies were not found in over half of cases (Table 46 above).

Table 47 Where found ... Admissions Policy by type of institution

	HEI	%	Non- HEI	%	Total	Overall %
via course page	34	24	7	11	41	20
via home page	51	37	5	8	56	28
not found	54	39	50	81	104	52
Grand Total	139	100	62	100	201	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- Admissions policy statements were far more likely to be found on HEI course and home pages than on non-HEI course and home pages
- Such statements could not be found in over three-quarters of non-HEIs course and home pages (Table 47 above)

Table 48 Where found .. Admissions Policy by size of institution

	size 1	size 2	size 3	size 4	Blank	Total	Overall %
via course page	9	17	9	6	-	41	20
via home page	11	22	14	9	-	56	28
not found	16	19	30	37	2	104	52
Total	36	58	53	52	2	201	100

(% may not total 100% due to rounding)

- There was some variation by size of institution with the proportion of not found highest in the smallest size category (also most likely to be non-HEIs) and lowest in the largest category (Table 48 above).

See Appendix 6 section A6.1 for the definition of “size” of institution.

Table 49 Admissions Policy clicks from course page by type

HEIs		Non-HEIs	
Clicks	No. inst	Clicks	No. inst
1	6	1	2
2	17	2	3
3	8	3	2
5	3		
Total	34	Total	7
Grand Total			41

- Analysis of the number of mouse clicks to locate the admissions policy statement from the course page shows that two clicks is by far the most common number, followed by three clicks
- In total 41 admissions policies were found via course pages
- No admissions policies were found in four clicks (Table 49 above).

Table 50 Admissions Policy clicks from home page by type

HEIs		Non-HEIs	
Clicks	No. inst	Clicks	No. inst
1	2	1	1
2	36	2	1
3	5	3	1
4	2	4	
5	2	5	1
6	1	6	1
7	1	7	
8	1	8	
9	1	9	
Total	51	Total	5
Grand Total			56

- Admissions policies were found via links from the home page in 56 cases
- 40 out of 56 cases were found within 2 clicks
- Overall of the 201 institutions, admissions policies were not found in 104 cases (Table 50 above).

Table 51 Admissions policy contents

Contents	Yes	%	No	%
Application Process	58	60	39	40
Feedback	49	51	48	49
Criminal Convictions	42	43	55	57
Complaints	46	47	51	53
Appeals	35	36	62	64
Disability and Equality	76	78	21	22

The content of admissions policy statements was analysed by the presence of six potential content areas (information on the application process, feedback, statements about criminal conviction exemptions, complaints, appeals and disability and equality).

- Three quarters of admissions policies contained information on disability but only a third contained information on the appeals process if an application was unsuccessful
- Sixty percent described the application process and around half contained information on feedback and complaints policies (Table 51 above).

Table 52 Content areas mentioned in policy statements

No. of content areas mentioned in each policy	Count	%
0	5	5
1	15	15
2	17	18
3	18	19
4	19	20
5	11	11
6	12	12
Total	97	100

- 27 of the 97 institutions (28%) that had admissions policy statements contained all of the following four content areas: application process, feedback, complaints and appeals
- 12% contained all six
- 5 statements (5%) contained none of the identified content areas (Table 52 above).

Table 53 Content areas by institution type

	HEI	%	non-HEI	%	Total	%
Have Admissions Policy statement	85	62	12	19	97	48
content areas						
Application Process	49	58	9	75	58	60
Feedback	45	53	4	33	49	51
Criminal Convictions	38	45	4	33	42	43
Complaints	44	52	2	17	46	47
Appeals	33	39	2	17	35	36
Disability and Equality	67	79	9	75	76	78

- HEIs were much more likely to have admission policy statements on their websites (62% as against 19% of non-HEIs)
- HEI admissions policy statements were much more likely to contain information relating to complaints and appeals procedures (Table 53 above).

5. Stakeholder views

The research team approached representatives from 18 organisations that had contributed to the Schwartz consultation and asked them a series of questions designed to explore how they saw the impact of aspects of the Report three years later (see Appendix 1 for question schedule). The survey was carried out by email during May and June 2008. A total of seven organisations responded and this section of the report summarises the responses (see Appendix 2 for list of respondents).

5.1 *Transparency*

1. Respondents were generally of the opinion that admissions to higher education have become more transparent from the perspective of applicants in schools and colleges. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) believed that the introduction of tuition fees and the establishment of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) had stimulated the move towards further transparency and that this is partly manifested in the increased use of Entry Profiles. The National Union of Students (NUS) noted that initiatives through the Delivery Partnership are beginning to deliver a more transparent admissions process - particularly in the area of Entry Profiles, however the Sutton Trust did not think this was the case in some selective institutions: "The use of admissions tests to deselect candidates before interview, for instance, is especially problematic" (Sutton Trust).
2. Respondents believed that since the Schwartz Report it has become easier for applicants and school/college staff to find out specific information on what qualifications and other personal characteristics are required for admission to HE courses, however there were reservations. The Sutton Trust reported that this was only the case where full UCAS Tariff information was made available on the UCAS website, while the Sixth Form Colleges' Forum (SFCF) and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) joined the Sutton Trust in believing this only to be the case to a certain extent. In practice the admissions process could often seem 'varied and hazy'. The NUS were concerned that, while Entry Profiles are providing plenty of information for those that use the UCAS system, less may be available to those that only access institutions' own website course pages. Respondents from the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) were more unequivocal in their belief that it has become easier for applicants to find out this kind of information.

3. UCAS points to several developments that have made it easier for applicants and schools/colleges to find out specific information about qualifications and characteristics that are required for entry to HE. Training delivered through UCAS on developing good Entry Profiles, along with training for schools and colleges advice and guidance staff on how best to use Entry Profiles have both played a significant role, as has the development of good practice guidance from SPA on developing Entry Profiles. UCAS also identified the revised QAA Code of Practice on Admissions as an influence. Other areas identified by UCAS as enhancing transparency were the greater availability of feedback for applicants that are rejected and the introduction of the Unistats university and college comparison site for subjects www.unistats.com/ which includes the National Student Survey results.

5.2 Consistency

4. On the question of whether the experience of applicants had become more uniform since the Schwartz Report, respondents were divided in their opinions. The Sutton Trust thought there had been some improvements but for competitive courses there was still considerable disparity; for UCAS this has been exacerbated to some extent by the proliferation of subject-specific tests and institutions' own entry tests. The SSAT respondent believed that uniformity could be achieved by interviewing all applicants, which would "give all admissions processes more credibility and make applicants feel yet more fairly scrutinised and selected/rejected".
5. ASCL and HMC both took the view that the experience of applicants had become more uniform, while the SFCF were unsure. The NUS welcomed clarity about the position of Advanced Diplomas in the UCAS Tariff and UCAS noted that too often applicants with vocational qualifications are asked to 'contact the institution'.

5.3 Influence of the Schwartz Report and SPA

6. On the extent to which changes relating to transparency, personal characteristics and uniformity of service since 2004 were due to the influence of the Schwartz Report and SPA (as opposed to other factors), the Sutton Trust, SSAT, UCAS and ASCL all responded positively. Sutton Trust reported a "positive impact"; ASCL "a strong influence" and SSAT credited SPA with successfully promoting Entry Profiles across the sector. The NUS noted that the Schwartz Report had "created the political background", while UCAS reported that the

Schwartz Report had placed admissions at the centre of national HE policy for a period and created a framework for institutions that wanted to review their admissions decision-making processes. SPA, through its involvement in the Delivery Partnership, and ministerial interest in the subject are key drivers in the reform process in the view of the NUS. Both HMC and SFCF found it hard to conclude either way.

7. UCAS also credited the Schwartz Report with stimulating demand for its Continuing Professional Development programme for HE Admissions staff, however it also believed that "increased competition, more intense media scrutiny, and the imperatives of widening participation have also contributed to increased interest in, and practice of, professionalism" in admissions. Other factors such as the QAA Code of Practice, OFFA, and the introduction of variable fees and UCAS' provision of a fully online applications system had also contributed to the enhancement of transparency and uniformity of service since the time of the Schwartz Report.

5.4 *Barriers to participation*

8. When asked if their organisations felt that the reforms suggested in the Schwartz Report have helped reduce the barriers some groups (such as the disabled and those with language difficulties) faced when applying to HE, most respondents were unable to provide unequivocal answers, though SFCF and SSAT thought that there was 'probably' some effect due to the reforms. UCAS noted that the Schwartz Report had identified the need for more support in these areas and that the UCAS CPD programme had generated improvement.

5.5 *Admissions and the institutional mission*

9. When asked if their organisations thought that practices and policies are now more or less closely aligned with other aspects of their missions, for example in relation to widening participation, none of the respondents were able to be entirely positive. The Sutton Trust found that "In some cases a genuine widening participation mission has seen admissions-related developments, but in others the two areas remain largely separate" and believe the defining factor to be where widening participation sits in the institution in relation to Student Recruitment. The SSAT thought that there was some lack of transparency in

relation to subjects that were less appropriate for entry. UCAS noted that institutions were becoming more adept at promoting their mission via their websites. HMC, SFCF and ASCL were all equivocal about this.

5.6 Professionalism

10. On the question of whether HE providers had become more professional in their relationship with applicants, and had policies and structures in place to enable this, all respondents were positive. The NUS highlighted the impact of initiatives such as feedback to unsuccessful applicants and the support of SPA in making institutions more professional in their outlook. UCAS also noted the role of SPA in aiding professionalisation, but commented that at institutional level "it can depend upon whether they have central admissions services or devolved departmental admissions".

11. UCAS point to the continued use of paper-copy application forms (between centrally based and devolved admissions decision-makers) and poor data sharing within institutions as areas where modern business practices have yet to be fully embraced. Further caveats were introduced by the Sutton Trust and SSAT, which highlighted continuing disparities. The SSAT response noted that on the whole: "HEIs do superb work in terms of Open Days, special subject Open Days, Access and so on".

6. Glossary of terms used in this report

Centralised/decentralised - admissions decision-making centres within institutions can be either centralised, with most if not all admissions decision-making located in a central department of the institution, or decentralised, with most if not all admissions decision-making located within departments, schools or faculties.

Delivery Partnership for Improving the HE Application Process - the Delivery Partnership is a UK-wide, higher education sector-led, partnership of different education stakeholders. It was established in autumn 2006 to implement reforms to the higher education applications process following the Government's response to the DfES-led Consultation on *Improving the Higher Education Applications Process* in May 2006.

Entry Profiles – are written by HEIs and are located on the UCAS Course Search website. They give prospective applicants to HE more information about the courses they want to study by providing details about entry qualifications, entry criteria and desirable personal characteristics etc. which may include the relative importance of the criteria plus the process detailing how admissions decisions are made, all on one website.

Fair Admissions - a) the name and subject of what is known as the **Schwartz Report**.

b) General use in the report: Fairness does not necessarily mean the same treatment of all applicants, but all applicants should have the same equality of opportunity. The Schwartz Steering Group stated in the Report its 'opinion that a fair admissions system is one that provides equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations...admissions should not be biased in favour of applicants from certain backgrounds or schools'. [Section C2, Schwartz Report 2004]

GuildHE - GuildHE is the new name for SCOP (the Standing Conference of Principals), which was originally established in 1978 as the representative organisation for the colleges of higher education. GuildHE (launched in 2006) now speaks for HE colleges, specialist institutions and some universities. It has 22 member institutions and six associate members.

Information, Advice and Guidance, a term used to describe careers and higher education advice provided by teachers and tutors in schools and colleges, Connexions careers staff and others such as staff from HEIs.

Mission Groups - are used in this report to differentiate between HEI types; they are associations of HEIs sharing particular missions which can be expressed through factors including: the relationship between research and teaching; the profile of applicants and acceptances in the student body; the balance between selecting and recruiting courses offered. Mission Groups referred to in this report are: 1994 Group; Million+; Russell Group; University Alliance (see below). GuildHE, a representative group that speaks for HE colleges, specialist institutions and some universities, is also referred to in this report although it is not a group which is defined by a shared mission among its members.

1994 Group

Established in 1994, this Group brings together 19 research-intensive universities. The Group provides a central vehicle to help members promote their common interests in higher education, respond efficiently to key policy issues, and share best methods and practice.

Million+

Established in 2007, formerly the Coalition of Modern Universities and later CMU: 'campaigning for mainstream universities'. Million+ describes itself as a university think-tank and has 28 member institutions which teach around half of the UK's higher education students each year.

Russell Group

Established in 1994, the Russell Group is an association of 20 research-intensive universities of the United Kingdom. In 2006/07, Russell Group Universities accounted for 66% (over £2.2 billion) of UK Universities' research grant and contract income, 68% of total Research Council income, 56% of all doctorates awarded in the United Kingdom, and over 30% of all students studying in the United Kingdom from outside the EU.

University Alliance

Established in 2006, the University Alliance, previously convened informally as the Alliance of Non-Aligned Universities, comprises a mixture of pre and post-1992 universities. The 23 member institutions have a balanced portfolio of research, teaching, enterprise and innovation integral to their missions.

OFFA - Office for Fair Access (OFFA) is an independent, non departmental public body which aims to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for under-represented groups in light of the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006-07. OFFA requires all publicly funded providers of higher education in England which decide to charge tuition fees above the standard level to submit an access agreement.

POLAR data –Participation of Local Areas - is a series of maps showing the participation of young people in higher education (HE) for geographical areas ranging from regions to wards available on the HEFCE website for England. The POLAR maps and data sets show how the chances of young people entering higher education vary by where they live. They are primarily intended as a web-based resource to aid those involved in widening participation activities.

QAA - The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997 to provide an integrated quality assurance service for UK higher education. It is an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies. The QAA's Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education includes admissions to HE. It was first issued in 2001 and updated in September 2006 in the light of the Schwartz Report, as Section 10: Admissions to higher education.

Recruiting courses/institutions - recruiting courses are those where there is no oversupply of applicants; in effect all applicants who meet the entry criteria are made an offer. Recruiting institutions are those that have a majority of courses which do not have an oversupply of applicants.

Selecting courses/institutions - selecting courses are those where there is an oversupply of applicants who meet the entry criteria; admissions decision-makers have to select from among qualified applicants. Selecting institutions are those which have a majority of courses that have an oversupply of applicants.

SPA - The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme was established in May 2006 as an independent UK wide programme to support institutions offering higher education programmes, to lead on the continued development of fair admissions, enhance professionalism, share good practice developed from evidence gained on visits to universities and colleges, and to provide advice to senior managers and admissions decision-makers and other stakeholders.

UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. The central organisation which processes applications for most full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges.

UCAS Course Search – the UCAS website which provides details for applicants and advisers of the 50,000 courses in the UCAS scheme, including Entry Profiles.

UCAS Wider Picture – the UCAS consultancy and staff development programme, mainly schools, colleges and HE advisers focussing on the specification of HE entry requirements, the UCAS Tariff and principles of good offer making, the 14-19 curriculum, fair admissions, widening participation and the electronic transformation of UCAS services.

UKCAT – The United Kingdom Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) is used in the selection process by a consortium of UK University Medical and Dental Schools. The test aims to help universities to make more informed choices from amongst the many highly qualified applicants who apply for their medical and dental degree programmes.

Widening Participation – assisting more people from under-represented groups, particularly low socio-economic groups, to participate successfully in higher education.

Appendix 1: Stakeholder survey questions

- Q1. Since the Schwartz Report (2004) do you think that admissions to HE has become more transparent from the perspective of applicants in schools and colleges?
- Q2. Since the Schwartz Report (2004) do you think it has become easier for applicants and school/college staff to find out specific information on what qualifications and other personal characteristics are required for admission to HE courses?
- Q3. Has the experience of applicants become more uniform, i.e. is the experience of applying to HE courses now more similar across the sector and is there more uniformity within institutions?
- Q4. If you think there have been changes relating to transparency, personal characteristics and uniformity of service since 2004, to what extent are these changes due to the Schwartz Report and SPA (as opposed to other factors)?
- Q5. Do you think the reforms suggested in the Schwartz Report have helped to reduce the barriers some groups face when applying to HE? (for example the disabled, those with language difficulties)
- Q6. Do you think institutions' admissions practices and policies are now more or less closely aligned with other aspects of their missions, for example in relation to widening participation?
- Q7. Since the Schwartz Report (2004) do you think that HE providers are now more professional in their relationships with applicants, and have underpinning policies and structures to support this?
- Q8. Are there specific aspects of the Schwartz Report or SPA's programme of support to HE providers that you would wish to comment on?

Appendix 2: Stakeholder survey respondents

The research team approached representatives from 18 organisations that had contributed to the Schwartz consultation and asked them a series of questions designed to explore how they saw the impact of aspects of the Report four years later. The survey was carried out by email during May and June 2008 and the following seven organisations responded:

Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC)

National Union of Students (NUS)

Sixth Form Colleges' Forum (SFCF)

Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT)

Sutton Trust

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

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Appendix 5: Additional survey tables

Additional survey tables referred to in section 3; quantitative findings are in the main body of the text

Table 2: Response rate: Breakdown by mission group

	N	%
1994 Group	14	17.7
GuildHE*	13	16.5
Million+	20	25.3
Russell Group	15	19
University Alliance	17	21.5
Total	79	100

* GuildHE is not a mission group but a representative group speaking for HE colleges, specialist institutions and some universities that do not necessarily share a mission.

Table 3: Response rate: Breakdown by UK administration

	N	%
England	126	78.8
Wales	9	5.6
Scotland	13	8.1
Northern Ireland	3	1.9
Unknown (anonymous response)	9	5.6
Total	160	100

Table 4a: Location of admissions services by HEI, non-HEIs and all institutions.

	Non-HEI		HEI		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All handled centrally	25	51	23	22.5	51	31.9
Combination: Some local, some central	15	30.6	59	57.8	76	47.5
All handled by school/faculty/department	9	18.4	20	19.6	33	20.6
Total	49	100	102	100	160	100

Table 4b: Location of admissions services by all English institutions

All English institutions: Do you consider your institution to have an admissions decision-making process that is				
	All handled centrally	Combination: some local, some central	All handled by school/faculty/department	Total
N	42	61	23	126
%	33.3	48.4	18.3	100.0

Table 4c: Location of admissions services by English HEIs

English HEIs: Do you consider your institution to have an admissions decision-making process that is				
	All handled centrally	Combination: some local, some central	All handled by school/faculty/department	Total
N	18	47	15	80
%	22.5	58.8	18.8	100.0

Table 4d: Location of admissions services: Open Comments

Nature of admissions decision-making service	N
Centralised	28
By school faculty/department but with some central oversight over part of the process	22
Moving towards centralisation	12
By school/faculty/department	8
Centralised but school/ faculty/ department for some subjects and special cases where interviews are required	8
School/faculty/department for some subjects and special cases where interviews are required	3
Total	81

Table 5a: Does your institution accept the following qualifications, have they been adopted since the Schwartz Report and where is this information publicised?

Institution type	Accept the following qualifications		Have they been adopted since Schwartz		Information publicised on institutional website			Information publicised in prospectus			Information publicised in UCAS Entry Profiles			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times	
A levels														
	n	160	0	0	155	150	4	2	148	3	2	132	13	6
	%	100	0	0	100	96.2	2.6	1.3	96.7	2.0	1.3	87.4	8.6	4.0
Scottish Highers														
	n	156	4	0	153	116	23	11	111	28	8	113	23	13
	%	97.5	2.5	0	100	77.4	15.3	7.3	75.5	19	5.4	75.8	15.4	8.7
Scottish Advanced Highers														
	n	159	1	1	153	112	25	14	107	30	11	112	25	13
	%	99.4	0.6	0.6	99.4	74.2	16.6	9.3	72.3	20.3	7.4	74.7	16.7	8.7
Welsh Baccalaureate														
	n	154	4	22	128	92	45	10	83	52	8	97	34	16
	%	97.5	2.5	14.7	85.3	62.6	30.6	6.8	58	36.4	5.6	66	23.1	10.9
BTEC qualifications														
	n	157	2	0.0	153	133	10	8	128	13	8	120	16	12
	%	98.7	1.3	0.0	100	88.1	6.6	5.3	85.9	8.7	5.4	81.1	10.8	8.1
Other vocational level 3 qualifications														
	n	148	10	6	142	107	16	19	97	25	21	102	24	18
	%	98.7	1.3	4	96	88.1	6.6	5.3	85.9	8.7	5.4	81.1	10.8	8.1
Access qualifications														
	n	158	1	3	150	127	6	16	126	12	10	116	17	13
	%	99.4	0.6	2	98	85.2	4.0	10.7	85.1	8.1	6.8	79.5	11.6	8.9
Other qualifications (in or outside UCAS tariff)														
	n	106	1	3	99	82	11	11	77	13	12	66	21	14
	%	99.1	0.9	2.9	97.1	78.8	10.6	10.6	75.5	12.7	11.8	65.3	20.8	13.9

Table 5b: Does your institution accept the following qualifications: Breakdown by institution type

Institution type		Accept the following qualifications		Have they been adopted since Schwartz		Information publicised on institutional website			Information publicised in prospectus			Information publicised in UCAS Entry Profiles		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times
A levels														
Non-HEI	n	49	0	0	48	40	4	2	40	3	2	35	5	3
	%	100	0	0	100	87	8.7	4.3	88.9	6.7	4.4	81.4	11.6	7
HEI	n	102	0	0	98	101	0	0	99	0	0	90	6	3
	%	100	0	0	100	100	0	0	100	0	0	90.9	6.1	3
Scottish Highers														
Non-HEI	n	48	1	0	47	21	16	6	21	16	5	24	12	6
	%	98	2	0	100	48.8	37.2	14	50	38.1	11.9	57.1	28.6	14.3
HEI	n	100	2	0	97	88	6	5	83	11	3	83	8	7
	%	98	2	0	100	88.9	6.1	5.1	85.6	11.3	3.1	84.7	8.2	7.1
Scottish Advanced Highers														
Non-HEI	n	48	1	0	47	19	16	7	19	16	6	23	13	6
	%	98	2	0	100	45.2	38.1	16.7	46.3	39	14.6	54.8	31	14.3
HEI	n	102	0	1	97	86	8	7	81	13	5	83	9	7
	%	100	0	1.1	99	85.1	7.9	6.9	81.8	13.1	5.1	83.3	9.1	7.1
Welsh Baccalaureate														
Non-HEI	n	45	3	2	43	19	18	4	17	19	4	21	15	5
	%	93.8	6.3	4.4	95.6	46.3	43.9	9.8	42.5	47.5	10	51.2	36.6	12.2
HEI	n	100	1	17	79	68	24	6	61	30	4	70	16	11
	%	99	1	17.7	82.3	69.4	24.5	6.1	64.2	31.6	4.2	72.2	16.5	11.3
BTEC qualifications														
Non-HEI	n	47	2	0	47	34	7	2	34	5	3	32	6	4
	%	95.9	4.1	0	100	79.1	16.3	4.7	81	11.9	7.1	76.2	14.3	9.5
HEI	n	101	0	0	97	90	3	6	85	8	5	81	8	8
	%	100	0	0	100	90.9	3	6.1	86.7	8.2	5.1	83.5	8.2	8.2
Other vocational level 3 qualifications														
Non-HEI	n	45	4	1	43	29	7	4	28	8	5	26	9	5
	%	91.8	8.2	2.3	97.7	72.5	17.5	10	68.3	19.5	12.2	65	22.5	12.5
HEI	n	94	6	5	90	72	7	14	63	15	15	69	13	13
	%	94	6	5.3	94.7	77.4	7.5	15.1	67.7	16.1	16.1	72.6	13.7	13.7
Access qualifications														
Non-HEI	n	48	1	1	46	30	5	5	30	9	2	29	8	4
	%	98	2	2.1	97.9	75	12.5	12.5	73.2	22	4.9	70.7	19.5	9.8
HEI	n	101	0	2	95	89	1	10	88	3	7	80	7	9
	%	100	0	2.1	97.9	89	1	10	89.8	3.1	7.1	83.3	7.3	9.4
Other qualifications (in or outside UCAS tariff)														
Non-HEI	n	24	1	0	25	16	7	2	14	6	4	14	8	2
	%	96	4	0	100	64	28	8	58.3	25	16.7	58.3	33.3	8.3
HEI	n	76	0	3	68	60	4	9	57	7	8	48	11	12
	%	100	0	4.2	95.8	82.2	5.5	12.3	79.2	9.7	11.1	67.6	15.5	16.9

Table 5c: Open comments

Specified other qualifications	N
International Baccalaureate	57
Other European and international qualifications (including European Baccalaureate)	54
Irish Leaving Certificate	24
Other UK qualifications (including Scottish Highers, Scottish Leaving Certificate, SCOTVEC and Welsh Baccalaureate)	12
CACHE Diploma	12
Professional certificates and diplomas (at level 3)	9
Foundation courses	8
OCR Nationals	7
Key Skills	4
14-19 Advanced Diplomas (not yet being delivered)	2

Table 6a: Do any of your courses identify subjects/qualifications at level 3 that you prefer not to consider and if 'yes', where is this publicised?

	Prefer not to accept?		Institutional website			Prospectus			UCAS entry profile		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	S/time	Yes	No	S/time	Yes	No	S/time
A levels											
n	21	119	19	0	2	19	1	1	18	0	3
%	15	85	90.5	0	9.5	90.5	4.8	4.8	85.7	0	14.3
Scottish Highers											
n	7	127	5	1	1	5	1	1	5	0	2
%	5.2	94.8	71.4	14.3	14.3	71.4	14.3	14.3	71.4	0	28.6
Scottish Advanced Highers											
n	7	128	5	1	1	5	1	1	6	0	1
%	5.2	94.8	71.4	14.3	14.3	71.4	14.3	14.3	85.7	0.0	14.3
Welsh Baccalaureate											
n	8	129	4	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	2
%	5.8	94.2	50	25	25	50	25	25	50	25	25
BTEC qualifications											
n	15	126	10	1	3	10	2	1	10	0	4
%	10.6	89.4	71.4	7.1	21.4	76.9	15.4	7.7	71.4	0	28.6
Other Vocational level 3 qualifications											
n	20	120	8	4	4	7	7	1	10	3	4
%	14.3	85.7	50	25	25	46.7	46.7	6.7	58.8	17.6	23.5
Access qualifications											
n	7	129	6	1	0	6	1	0	6	1	0
%	5.1	94.9	85.7	14.3	0	85.7	14.3	0	85.7	14.3	0
Other Qualifications in or outside the UCAS tariff											
n	7	109	3	3	1	3	3	1	4	1	2
%	6	94	42.9	42.9	14.3	42.9	42.9	14.3	57.1	14.3	28.6

Table 6b: Do any of your courses identify subjects/qualifications at level 3 that you prefer not to consider? Breakdown by mission group

		Yes	No	N
A levels	1994 Group	40	60	10
	GuildHE*	15.4	84.6	13
	Million+	5.6	94.4	18
	Russell Group	35.7	64.3	14
	University Alliance	6.3	93.8	16
Scottish Highers	1994 Group	20	80	10
	GuildHE*	0	100	13
	Million+	0	100	17
	Russell Group	23.1	76.9	13
	University Alliance	0	100	15
Scottish Advanced Highers	1994 Group	20	80	10
	GuildHE*	0	100	13
	Million+	0	100	17
	Russell Group	15.4	84.6	13
	University Alliance	0	100	16
Welsh Baccalaureate	1994 Group	20	80	10
	GuildHE*	0	100	13
	Million+	0	100	17
	Russell Group	14.3	85.7	14
	University Alliance	6.3	93.8	16
BTEC qualifications	1994 Group	18.2	81.8	11
	GuildHE*	0	100	13
	Million+	0	100	17
	Russell Group	35.7	64.3	14
	University Alliance	11.8	88.2	17
Other vocational qualifications	1994 Group	27.3	72.7	11
	GuildHE*	0	100	13
	Million+	0	100	17
	Russell Group	50	50	14
	University Alliance	6.3	93.8	16
Access qualifications	1994 Group	0	100	9
	GuildHE*	0	100	13
	Million+	0	100	17
	Russell Group	21.4	78.6	14
	University Alliance	0	100	16
Other qualifications	1994 Group	0	100	8
	GuildHE*	20	80	10
	Million+	0	100	16
	Russell Group	20	80	10
	University Alliance	0	100	15

* GuildHE is not a mission group but a representative group speaking for HE colleges, specialist institutions and some universities that do not necessarily share a mission.

Table 7a: What other entry criteria do you use for admissions decisions, has this been newly adopted since the Schwartz Report and where is this information publicised?

		Entry criteria used?		Has this been newly adopted since Schwartz?		Institutional website			Prospectus			UCAS Entry Profile		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	S/ti mes	Yes	No	S/ti mes	Yes	No	S/ti mes
References	n	149	6	1	151	79	29	29	79	28	28	60	48	28
	%	96.1	3.9	0.7	99.3	57.7	21.2	21.2	58.5	20.7	20.7	44	35	21
Admissions tests	n	68	83	7	114	51	31	23	45	36	21	41	43	21
	%	45	55	5.8	94.2	48.6	29.5	21.9	44.1	35.3	20.6	39	41	20
Individual interviews	n	157	3	1	153	100	9	38	99	10	34	85	24	34
	%	98.1	1.9	0.6	99.4	68	6.1	25.9	69.2	7	23.8	59.4	16.8	23.8
Group interviews	n	86	60	2	122	55	28	28	54	31	24	47	39	22
	%	58.9	41.1	1.6	98.4	49.5	25.2	25.2	49.5	28.4	22	43.5	36.1	20.4
Personal statement	n	152	4	0	152	79	28	30	79	28	30	62	46	29
	%	97.4	2.6	0	100	57.7	20.4	21.9	57.7	20.4	21.9	45.3	33.6	21.2
Relevant experience	n	152	5	0	154	92	10	39	94	10	36	69	30	39
	%	96.8	3.2	0	100	65.2	7.1	27.7	67.1	7.1	25.7	50	21.7	28.3
Work experience/skills	n	147	9	0	152	90	11	38	91	11	35	66	31	40
	%	94.2	5.8	0	100	64.7	7.9	27.3	66.4	8	25.5	48.2	22.6	29.2
Personal development (e.g. ASDAN)	n	83	57	5	108	35	37	29	38	37	27	29	44	27
	%	59.3	40.7	4.4	95.6	34.7	36.6	28.7	37.3	36.3	26.5	29	44	27
APEL (Accreditation of prior experiential learning)	n	128	24	4	134	75	16	35	73	18	33	55	29	34
	%	84.2	15.8	2.9	97.1	59.5	12.7	27.8	58.9	14.5	26.6	46.6	24.6	28.8
Other	n	20	9	0	19	11	3	4	11	3	3	10	6	2
	%	100	100	0	100	61.1	16.7	22.2	64.7	17.6	17.6	55.6	33.3	11.1

Table 7a (i): Cross tabulation: of those who stated 'yes' the entry criterion is used, whether they publicise that they accept...

	Entry criterion used		Of those who accept the criterion: is this publicised on institutional website			Of those who accept the criterion: is this publicised in the prospectus			Of those who accept the criterion: is this in the UCAS Entry Profiles		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Stimes	Yes	No	Stimes	Yes	No	Stimes
References	149	6	78	25	29	78	24	28	59	44	28
	96.1	3.9	59.1	18.9	22.0	60.0	18.5	21.5	45.0	33.6	21.4
Admissions tests	68	83	39	6	16	35	9	17	32	13	16
	45	55	63.9	9.8	26.2	57.4	14.8	27.9	52.5	21.3	26.2
Individual interviews	157	3	100	7	37	99	8	33	85	22	33
	98.1	1.9	69.4	4.9	25.7	70.7	5.7	23.6	60.7	15.7	23.6
Group interviews	86	60	50	10	21	49	12	18	42	18	18
	58.9	41.1	61.7	12.3	25.9	62.0	15.2	22.8	53.8	23.1	23.1
Personal statement	152	4	77	30	30	78	26	30	61	44	29
	97.4	2.6	56.2	21.9	21.9	58.2	19.4	22.4	45.5	32.8	21.6
Relevant experience	152	5	92	8	38	94	8	35	69	28	38
	96.8	3.2	66.7	5.8	27.5	68.6	5.8	25.5	51.1	20.7	28.1
Work experience/ skills	147	9	90	7	36	90	7	33	65	26	38
	94.2	5.8	67.7	5.3	27.1	69.2	5.4	25.4	50.4	20.2	29.5
Personal development (eg. ASDAN)	83	57	33	16	26	35	16	24	26	22	25
	59.3	40.7	44.0	21.3	34.7	46.7	21.3	32.0	35.6	30.1	34.2
APEL (Accreditation prior experiential learning)	128	24	73	9	33	71	11	32	53	22	33
	84.2	15.8	63.5	7.8	28.7	62.3	9.6	28.1	49.1	20.4	30.6

Table 7b: What other entry criteria do you use for admissions decisions? Breakdown by mission group

		Yes (%)	No (%)	N
References	1994 Group	100	0	14

	GuildHE*	100	0	12
	Million+	95	5	20
	Russell Group	100	0	15
	University Alliance	100	0	17
Admissions tests	1994 Group	57.1	42.9	14
	GuildHE*	54.5	45.5	11
	Million+	47.4	52.6	19
	Russell Group	93.3	6.7	15
	University Alliance	35.3	64.7	17
Individual interviews	1994 Group	100	0	14
	GuildHE*	92.3	7.7	13
	Million+	100	0	20
	Russell Group	100	0	15
	University Alliance	100	0	17
Group interviews	1994 Group	64.3	35.7	14
	GuildHE*	100	0	12
	Million+	80	20	20
	Russell Group	53.3	46.7	15
	University Alliance	76.5	23.5	17
Personal statement	1994 Group	100	0	14
	GuildHE*	100	0	12
	Million+	100	0	20
	Russell Group	100	0	15
	University Alliance	100	0	17
Relevant experience	1994 Group	100	0	14
	GuildHE*	100	0	13
	Million+	100	0	20
	Russell Group	100	0	15
	University Alliance	100	0	17
Work experience/skills	1994 Group	92.3	7.7	13
	GuildHE*	100	0	13
	Million+	100	0	20
	Russell Group	100	0	15
	University Alliance	100	0	17
Personal development	1994 Group	61.5	38.5	13
	GuildHE*	77.8	22.2	9
	Million+	72.2	27.8	18
	Russell Group	40	60	15
	University Alliance	82.4	17.6	17
APEL	1994 Group	61.5	38.5	13
	GuildHE*	100	0	13
	Million+	100	0	19
	Russell Group	57.1	42.9	14
	University Alliance	100	0	17

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Table 8a: Do you attach weighting to different entry criteria and where are these weightings publicised?

	Weighting used?			Adopted since Schwartz?		Institutional website			Prospectus			UCAS Entry Profile		
	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times
All	11	115	23	5	29	6	13	15	4	17	12	3	17	14
%	7.4	77.2	15.4	14.7	85.3	17.6	38.2	44.1	12.1	51.5	36.4	8.8	50	41.2
Non-HEIs	0	43	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
%	0	95.6	4.4	0	100	0	50	50	0	50	50	0	50	50
HEIs	9	66	21	3	27	6	10	14	4	14	11	3	14	13
%	9.4	68.8	21.9	10	90	20	33.3	46.7	13.8	48.3	37.9	10	46.7	43.3

Table 8b: Do you attach weighting to different entry criteria? Breakdown by mission group

	Yes	No	S/times	N
1994 Group	0	69.2	30.8	13
GuildHE*	8.3	91.7	0	12
Million+	0	78.9	21.1	19
Russell Group	40	46.7	13.3	15
University Alliance	0	62.5	37.5	16

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Table 9a: What information about undergraduate courses can applicants access through Entry Profiles?

		Undergraduate courses			Has this been newly adopted since Schwartz?		Is this a link to information published on the institution's website?	
		Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	Yes	No
Academic entry requirements	n	137	10	3	31	102	85	49
	%	91.3	6.7	2	23.3	76.7	63.4	36.6
Vocational entry requirements	n	112	20	14	31	89	77	43
	%	76.7	13.7	9.6	25.8	74.2	64.2	35.8
Non-academic entry requirements (e.g. work experience)	n	89	33	23	29	76	72	35
	%	61.4	22.8	15.9	27.6	72.4	67.3	32.7
Applicant profiles	n	39	73	28	23	40	45	18
	%	27.9	52.1	20	36.5	63.5	71.4	28.6
Admissions decision-making processes	n	51	56	31	29	48	55	21
	%	37.0	40.6	22.5	37.7	62.3	72.4	27.6
Accessibility and equality statements and admissions processes	n	71	42	21	28	58	69	18
	%	53	31.3	15.7	32.6	67.4	79.3	20.7
Other	n	137	10	3	7	12	10	10
	%	91.3	6.7	2	36.8	63.2	50	50

Table 9b: What information about undergraduate courses can applicants access through Entry Profiles? Breakdown by mission group

		Yes	No	S/times	N
Academic entry requirements	1994 Group	100	0	0	14
	GuildHE*	92.3	7.7	0	13
	Million+	84.2	10.5	5.3	19
	Russell Group	100	0	0	15
	University Alliance	94.1	0	5.9	17
Vocational entry requirements	1994 Group	85.7	0	14.3	14
	GuildHE*	91.7	8.3	0	12
	Million+	68.4	15.8	15.8	19
	Russell Group	100	0	0	15
	University Alliance	70.6	11.8	17.6	17
Non-academic entry requirements	1994 Group	53.8	23.1	23.1	13
	GuildHE*	83.3	8.3	8.3	12
	Million+	57.9	26.3	15.8	19
	Russell Group	73.3	13.3	13.3	15
	University Alliance	47.1	17.6	35.3	17
Applicant profiles	1994 Group	38.5	30.8	30.8	13
	GuildHE*	23.1	46.2	30.8	13
	Million+	22.2	61.1	16.7	18
	Russell Group	50	42.9	7.1	14
	University Alliance	35.3	17.6	47.1	17
Admissions decision-making processes	1994 Group	46.2	7.7	46.2	13
	GuildHE*	58.3	33.3	8.3	12
	Million+	23.5	47.1	29.4	17
	Russell Group	40	20	40	15
	University Alliance	60	20	20	15
Accessibility and equality statements and admissions processes	1994 Group	38.5	23.1	38.5	13
	GuildHE*	75	25	0	12
	Million+	56.3	25	18.8	16
	Russell Group	60	20	20	15
	University Alliance	60	20	20	15
Other	1994 Group	66.7	0	33.3	3
	GuildHE*	33.3	66.7	0	3
	Million+	50	50	0	6
	Russell Group	100	0	0	1
	University Alliance	50	50	0	2

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Table 10a: Do you use any of the following personal contextual information to inform individual admissions decisions and where is it publicised?

		Undergraduate courses			Newly adopted since Schwartz ?		Institutional website			Prospectus			UCAS Entry Profile		
		Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times	Yes	No	S/times
First generation HE applicant	n	17	116	20	10	25	13	16	4	10	19	3	4	23	4
	%	11.1	75.8	13.1	28.6	71.4	39.4	48.5	12.1	31.3	59.4	9.4	12.9	74.2	12.9
Disability	n	39	91	25	5	55	37	15	5	34	18	4	15	30	8
	%	25.2	58.7	16.1	8.3	91.7	64.9	26.3	8.8	60.7	32.1	7.1	28.3	56.6	15.1
Long-term illness	n	35	79	39	7	63	26	32	7	22	41	2	10	50	4
	%	22.9	51.6	25.5	10	90	40	49.2	10.8	33.8	63.1	3.1	15.6	78.1	6.3
Attending a low achieving school	n	32	96	26	13	42	22	23	6	16	29	5	10	38	3
	%	20.8	62.3	16.9	23.6	76.4	43.1	45.1	11.8	32	58	10	19.6	74.5	5.9
Looked after children	n	24	104	25	13	34	22	32	8	12	26	5	5	33	4
	%	15.7	68.0	16.3	27.7	72.3	35.5	51.6	12.9	27.9	60.5	11.6	11.9	78.6	9.5
Family problems	n	27	83	43	5	60	5	6	1	16	38	7	9	49.0	2
	%	17.6	54.2	28.1	7.7	92.3	41.7	50	8.3	26.2	62.3	11.5	15	81.7	3.3
Other	n	7	11	4	2	14	13	16	4	16	38	7	0	12	0
	%	31.8	50	18.2	12.5	87.5	39.4	48.5	12.1	26.2	62.3	11.5	0	100	0

Table 10b: Do you use any of the following personal contextual information to inform individual admissions decisions? Breakdown by mission group

		Yes	No	S/times	N
First-generation HE applicant	1994 Group	14.3	71.4	14.3	14
	GuildHE*	9.1	90.9	0	11
	Million+	5	80	15	20
	Russell Group	20	73.3	6.7	15
	University Alliance	5.9	58.8	35.3	17
Disability	1994 Group	28.6	50	21.4	14
	GuildHE*	16.7	75	8.3	12
	Million+	25	60	15	20
	Russell Group	40	40	20	15
	University Alliance	11.8	64.7	23.5	17
Long-term illness	1994 Group	28.6	35.7	35.7	14
	GuildHE*	9.1	72.7	18.2	11
	Million+	15	60	25	20
	Russell Group	46.7	13.3	40	15
	University Alliance	17.6	47.1	35.3	17
Attending a low-achieving school	1994 Group	28.6	28.6	42.9	14
	GuildHE*	27.3	72.7	0	11
	Million+	10	75	15	20
	Russell Group	53.3	26.7	20	15
	University Alliance	17.6	58.8	23.5	17
Looked-after children	1994 Group	21.4	50	28.6	14
	GuildHE*	0	100	0	11
	Million+	5	75	20	20
	Russell Group	40	40	20	15
	University Alliance	11.8	64.7	23.5	17
Family problems	1994 Group	21.4	42.9	35.7	14
	GuildHE*	0	81.8	18.2	11
	Million+	10	55	35	20
	Russell Group	53.3	6.7	40	15
	University Alliance	5.9	47.1	47.1	17
Other	1994 Group	75	0	25	4
	GuildHE*	0	100	0	2
	Million+	0	50	50	4
	Russell Group	100	0	0	2
	University Alliance	0	100	0	3

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Table 11a: Do you use any information sources other than the application form to gather information about potential students? By all, non-HEI and HEI

	Yes	No	Total
All	82	77	159
%	51.6	48.4	100
Non-HEI	22	26	48
%	45.8	54.2	100
HEI	57	45	102
%	55.9	44.1	100

Table 11b: Do you use any information sources other than the application form to gather information about potential students? Breakdown by mission group

	No	Yes	N
1994 Group	14.3	85.7	14
GuildHE*	38.5	61.5	13
Million+	80.0	20.0	20
Russell Group	33.3	66.7	15
University Alliance	58.8	41.2	17

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Table 12: Which of the following selection criteria do your admissions decision-makers consider?

		Selection criteria
Predicted academic achievement	n	144
	%	91.1
Previous academic achievement (level 3)	n	150
	%	94.9
Previous academic achievement (level 2)	n	137
	%	86.7
Unit grade data	n	45
	%	28.5
Other	n	68
	%	43

% do not total 100 due to multiple responses total n =158

Table 13: What methods does your institution employ to monitor and evaluate the reliability and validity of admissions decision-making methods?

	Response	n	%
Monitoring of course performance (students' progression on the course, retention rates or students' performance)	Yes	143	94.1
	No	9	5.9
	Total	152	100
Other internal quality processes	Yes	129	89.6
	No	15	10.4
	Total	144	100
Course revalidation	Yes	114	80.9
	No	27	19.1
	Total	141	100
Independent/external audit	Yes	82	64.6
	No	45	35.4
	Total	127	100
Benchmarking	Yes	74	59.2
	No	51	40.8
	Total	125	100
Other	Yes	5	100
	No	0	0
	Total	5	100

Table 14: Does your institution use monitoring data to inform and update admissions policy?

		Monitoring data used?			Total n	Has this been newly adopted since Schwartz?		Total n
		For all courses	For some courses	For none of the courses		Yes	No	
Institution's own admissions data	n	123	19	9	151	8	115	123
	%	81.5	12.6	6.0	100	6.5	93.5	100
UCAS data	n	98	34	15	147	6	108	114
	%	66.7	23.1	10.2	100	5.3	94.7	100
Other national data sets	n	52	18	31	101	5	72	77
	%	51.5	17.8	30.7	100	6.5	93.5	100
Institutional student experience data	n	74	18	24	116	8	80	88
	%	63.8	15.5	20.7	100	9.1	90.9	100
National Student Survey	n	70	17	27	114	14	69	83
	%	61.4	14.9	23.7	100	16.9	83.1	100
Other	n	8	2	9	19	0	12	12
	%	42.1	10.5	47.4	100	0	100	100

Table 15a: Do your admissions decisions making staff...

						Has this been newly adopted since Schwartz?			
		Regularly	Occasionally	Never	N/A	Total	Yes	No	Total
Develop projects with the widening participation team	n	41	64	13	14	132	10	74	84
	%	31.1	48.5	9.8	10.6	100	11.9	88.1	100
Share admissions data with the widening participation team	n	83	48	5	11	147	8	89	97
	%	56.5	32.7	3.4	7.5	100	8.2	91.8	100
Take part in outreach work	n	93	54	1	2	150	5	104	109
	%	62	36	0.7	1.3	100	4.6	95.4	100
Target under-represented groups	n	68	58	12	8	146	10	86	96
	%	46.6	39.7	8.2	5.5	100	10.4	89.6	100
Target pre-application	n	76	45	17	9	147	7	82	89
	%	51.7	30.6	11.6	6.1	100	7.9	92.1	100
Target post-application	n	75	41	15	11	142	4	81	85
	%	52.8	28.9	10.6	7.7	100	4.7	95.3	100

NB: no respondents answered 'other'

Table 15b: Do your admissions decisions making staff...? Breakdown by mission group

		Regularly	Occasionally	Never	N/A	N
Develop projects with the widening participation team	1994 Group	33.3	66.7	0	0	12
	GuildHE*	25	58.3	8.3	8.3	12
	Million+	31.3	56.3	12.5	0	16
	Russell Group	53.3	40	6.7	0	15
	University Alliance	50	37.5	6.3	6.3	16
Share admissions data with the widening participation team	1994 Group	57.1	42.9	0	0	14
	GuildHE*	61.5	38.5	0	0	13
	Million+	57.9	36.8	5.3	0	19
	Russell Group	73.3	26.7	0	0	15
	University Alliance	68.8	31.3	0	0	16
Take part in outreach work	1994 Group	71.4	28.6	0	0	14
	GuildHE*	61.5	38.5	0	0	13
	Million+	50	50	0	0	20
	Russell Group	80	20	0	0	15
	University Alliance	70.6	29.4	0	0	17
Target under-represented groups	1994 Group	38.5	46.2	0	2	13
	GuildHE*	23.1	76.9	0	0	13
	Million+	45	35	15	5	20
	Russell Group	53.3	33.3	13.3	0	15
	University Alliance	50	43.8	0	6.3	16
Target pre-application	1994 Group	30.8	61.5	0	1	13
	GuildHE*	53.8	46.2	0	0	13
	Million+	60	20	15	5	20
	Russell Group	60	26.7	13.3	0	15
	University Alliance	66.7	20	6.7	6.7	15
Target post-application	1994 Group	58.3	41.7	0	0	12
	GuildHE*	54.5	36.4	9.1	0	11
	Million+	60	25	10	5	20
	Russell Group	73.3	20	6.7	0	15
	University Alliance	60	33.3	0	6.7	15

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Table 16a: Has the degree of centralisation of your admissions department changed since Schwartz?

	Degree of centralisation changed since Schwartz?							
	Yes, become more centralised		Yes, become more decentralised		No		Other	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
All	53	33.5	2	1.3	93	58.9	10	6.3
Non-HEI	6	12.2	1	2.0	39	79.6	3	6.1
HEI	45	45	1	1	48	48	6	6

Table 16b: If yes, please indicate why it has changed? (Please tick all that apply)

Why changed		Yes	No	Total
General changes in the HE sector	n	43	22	65
	%	66.2	33.8	100
As a result of internal pressure from departments/faculties/senior management	n	36	29	65
	%	55.4	44.6	100
Changes to QAA code of practice on admissions	n	33	32	65
	%	50.8	49.2	100
Publication of Schwartz Report	n	24	41	65
	%	36.9	63.1	100
General changes in benchmark/competitor institutions	n	17	48	65
	%	26.2	73.8	100
Cost	n	16	49	65
	%	24.6	75.4	100
Good practice examples published by SPA	n	13	52	65
	%	20	80	100
As a result of pressure from applicants	n	9	56	65
	%	13.8	86.2	100
Specific changes in benchmark/competitor institutions	n	7	58	65
	%	10.8	89.2	100
Pressure from feeder schools/colleges	n	5	60	65
	%	7.7	92.3	100
As a result of pressure from public/media opinion	n	3	62	65
	%	4.6	95.4	100
As a result of SPA visit	n	2	63	65
	%	3.1	96.9	100
Other	n	23	42	65
	%	35.4	64.6	100

Table 17: Does the same line manager manage the admissions and widening participation staff? Breakdown by mission group

	Yes	No	N
1994 Group	64.3	35.7	14
GuildHE*	25.0	75.0	12
Million+	25.0	75.0	20
Russell Group	53.3	46.7	15
University Alliance	23.5	76.5	17

* GuildHE is not a mission group but a representative group speaking for HE colleges, specialist institutions and some universities that do not necessarily share a mission

Table 18: Has your admissions service increased the amount of staff development and training in the following areas and how important are these issues?

	Increased			Importance					
				Not at all important			Very important		
	Yes	No	N	1	2	3	4	5	N
Awareness of the Schwartz Report principles	69.8	30.2	149	5.9	5.1	22.1	30.1	36.8	136
Awareness of the QAA Code of practice on admissions	80.5	19.5	154	2.1	0	15.8	29.5	52.7	146
Awareness of data sources	76.7	23.3	150	1.4	8.4	21.7	30.8	37.8	143
Awareness of new vocational qualifications	83.8	16.2	154	3.4	1.4	14.3	26.5	54.4	147
Dissemination to departments	77.1	22.9	144	3.7	5.2	14.9	30.6	45.5	134
Awareness of barriers to HE participation	78.3	21.7	152	0.7	0.7	13.4	38.7	46.5	142
Assessment of ability of candidate to complete	57.0	43.0	149	1.5	1.5	14.1	35.6	47.4	135
Knowledge of alternative assessment methods	53.1	46.9	143	2.4	4.8	30.4	33.6	28.8	125
Equal opportunities	88.2	11.8	152	1.4	0	7.6	27.6	63.4	145
Other	0	0	11	0	0	11.1	0	88.9	9

Table 19b: Do you think that it is important that universities and colleges have students from a wide range of backgrounds: Breakdown by mission group

	Yes	Not sure	N
1994 Group	100	0	14
GuildHE*	100	0	13
Million+	95	5	20
Russell Group	93.3	6.7	15
University Alliance	100	0	17

* GuildHE is not a mission group but a representative group speaking for HE colleges, specialist institutions and some universities.

Table 19d: If yes, should universities and colleges choose students partly in order to achieve such a mix? Breakdown by mission group

	Yes	No	Not sure	N
1994 Group	28.6	35.7	35.7	14
GuildHE*	45.5	45.5	9.1	11
Million+	25.0	50.0	25.0	20
Russell Group	46.7	33.3	20.0	15
University Alliance	31.3	62.5	6.3	16

* GuildHE is not a mission group but a representative group speaking for HE colleges, specialist institutions and some universities

Appendix 6: Methodology and additional tables from web desk-testing report

This appendix contains the methodology and additional tables regarding the findings from 201 institutions (139 HEIs and 62 non-HEIs, providing information on a total of 340 course web-pages) which were interrogated during April and May 2008.

A6.1 Institution sampling

The main concern when sampling institutions to test was to achieve sub samples of HEIs and non-HEIs of varying sizes. The source for the sample was drawn from accepted applicants for 2007 entry to each UCAS member institution. The team initially created five size categories in order that larger and smaller institutions (HEI or non-HEI) would not be compared against each other, but institutions of either type could be compared against others in the same size category. As can be seen in Table 23, the 139 HEIs are spread among all the size categories, with 94 in the two largest categories (1 and 2); no non-HEIs were represented in the largest two categories, with about a third in size 3 and two-thirds in size 4.

Table 23 Size ranges and derivation

Range of acceptances	Size code	HEI	non-HEI	No. of institutions
0-99	5	3	2	5
100-299	4	8	40	48
300-2000	3	34	20	54
2001-3999	2	58	-	58
4000-8500	1	36	-	36
Total		139	62	201

Source: Applications (choices) and accepted applicants to each UCAS member university and college 2007, UCAS http://www.ucas.ac.uk/about_us/stat_services/stats_online/data_tables/abushei/abushei2007/ accessed 25/02/08

Overall the sample of 201 consisted of all HEIs plus 62 non-HEIs from categories 3, 4 and 5 giving a total of 139 HEIs and 62 non-HEIs (Table 24).

Table 24 Relationship between institution type and size: overall

Type	Size	No	%	Type	Size	No	%*
HEI	1	36	26	Non-HEI	1	-	-
	2	58	42		2	-	-
	3	34	24		3	20	32
	4	8	6		4	40	65
	5	3	4	Blank **		2	3
HEI Total		139	100	Non-HEI Total		62	100

NB: Size 1 = largest, Size 5 = smallest.

(*% may not total 100% due to rounding ** 2 institutions size categories were not available).

A6.2 Data recording

The data recording tool consisted of an Excel spreadsheet with coded column headers and a coding frame in the form of a word document providing detailed information on the requirements of each column. The spreadsheet began with the following headers: Institution code; Institution name; Size; Type; and URL, all of which were pre-populated after the sampling stage and prior to the dataset being divided among the research team.

The four researchers were asked to select one course from the largest subject area from 'UCAS how to apply', 'undergraduate applicants' or similar page on the institution's website (see above) and write in the name of the course under Course 1. They were then asked to enter responses under the following set of headers:

- Click to record the number of clicks from the institution's home page to the page containing admissions information for the course identified.

This was followed by eight more header columns for Course 1 which invited researchers to select from a drop-down menu where specific information could be found. The drop down options in each case were: 'on page'; 'new page generic'; 'new page specific'; 'external site' and 'not found'. 'On page' meant that the information was found on the page containing the course information; 'new page generic' meant that the information was found on another generic page, e.g. for all undergraduate courses either within the department or the institution as a whole, or via a link; 'new page specific' meant the information was found on a new page specific to the course or courses offered in the subject area, or via a link; 'external site' meant the information was found on a site external to the university website (i.e. hosted by a professional body or UCAS) via a link; 'not found' meant there was no reference to or link to the information on the course information page.

- **Entry Requirements** to record where entry requirements for the course can be found (or not found)
- **UCAS Tariff Points** to record where the number of UCAS points for entry to the particular course can be found (or not found as many institutions do not use UCAS Tariff Points)
- **'Equivalent to'** to record where information about qualifications other than GCE A levels for the course can be found (or not found)
- **Applicant Profile** to record where information about applicant profiles for the course can be found (or not found). Note; not all institutions use applicant profiles
- **Interview** to record where information about the requirement or possible requirement of interviews for the particular course can be found (or not found)
- **Test/Portfolio/audition** to record where information about the requirement or possible requirement of an admissions test or the need to show a portfolio of work (for creative arts courses) or the need to have an audition (for performing arts courses) for the course can be found (or not found)
- **Previous Experience** to record where information about the requirement or preference for previous experience for the course can be found (or not found)
- **Equality** to record where information on equality or equal opportunities in relation to applications for disabled students for the course can be found (or not found)
- **Timer** to record the approximate number of minutes taken to find all the above information for the course.

Researchers were then asked to repeat this exercise in the case of HEIs for the second course, selected from the lowest recruiting subject area, as Course 2. The next column, headed TIMER, invited researchers to write in the approximate number of minutes taken to find all the above information on each of the courses.

The next section of the recording tool was designed to capture information about the institution's overall general admission policy statement which may take various forms but would be the location of information for applicants about the general process of applying including, for example, details of how applicants might be able to follow the progress of their application or general principles of what contextual factors might be taken into account.

The first header in this section, 'Admissions policy?', offered the same drop down menu options as the course information finder ('on page'; 'new page generic'; 'new page specific'; 'external site', 'not

found'). This was followed by two headers designed to capture how easily the policy statement was found: Home clicks to record how many mouse clicks were required from the institution home page to the policy statement (using the 'search' function); Course clicks to record how many mouse clicks were required from the course page (using the 'search' function from the home page if there was no link from the course page).

Researchers were then offered six more columns to capture the content of admissions policy statements (where found). In this section the spreadsheet offered two options on a drop-down menu: 'yes' and 'no'. The headers were:

- **Application process** to record whether the statement contains information that describes the decision-making process for applications
- **Feedback** to record whether the statement contains information that describes the process by which applicants can receive feedback on their application
- **Crime** to record whether the statement contains information that describes the procedure regarding the declaration of criminal convictions or if CRB/Disclosure Scotland check is required
- **Complaints** to record whether the statement contains information that describes the process by which complaints about the application process will be dealt with
- **Appeals** to record whether the statement contains information that describes the process by which appeals or a review of a decision in relation to the application process will be dealt with
- **Disabilities** to record whether the statement contains information that describes procedures relating to applicants with a disability or who have other specific requirements e.g. mature students and carers.

The spreadsheet was complemented by two open text columns (**Comment Looks** and **Comment Use**) designed to record researchers' views on the visual appearance and general usability of course admissions web pages and the admissions policy statement, or any other comments they chose to make about the process of locating and recording this information.

The design of this research tool was carried out in the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research (CEIR) at Sheffield Hallam University by the Project Director and four Research Associates, all of whom contributed to the iterative design of the spreadsheet and coding frame during a piloting

stage, and comments from other members of the research team and SPA. The drop down menus particularly benefited from discussion between members of the team during the piloting stage.

After each researcher had recorded data from 10-15 institutions, the team met once again to examine any inconsistencies in recording practice and minor adjustments were made as necessary.

A6.3 Desk-testing frequencies

A6.3.1 Courses by subject area, size and type of institution

In the following tables the terms ‘Course 1’ and ‘Course 2’ are used. Note that Course 1 is taken from the largest subject area as defined by the total number of fulltime and sandwich students by academic subject category under the universities and colleges institutional guide on the Course Search section of the UCAS website at each of the 201 institutions (139 HEIs, 62 non-HEIs). Course 2 is taken from the smallest subject area and is also only taken from HEIs (for reasons described in the sampling notes). This means that Course 1 can be taken to indicate the largest recruiting subject areas of an institution and Course 2 the lowest (for HEIs only) (Table 25).

Table 25 Course – Course 1, Course 2 and combined total

Subject area	C1 Largest	C2 Smallest	Total
Architecture, Building and Planning	1	19	20
Art & Design, Performing Arts	51	19	70
Business & Administrative Studies	30	12	42
Combined	3	10	13
Education	10	17	27
Engineering & Technology	8	10	18
Humanities	27	13	40
Mathematical Sciences, IT & Computing	4	9	13
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science	11	8	19
Science	22	3	25
Social, Economic, Political, & Legal Studies	16	9	25
Subjects Allied to Medicine	18	10	28
Total	201	139	340

Course 1 (C1) represents the highest provision of subject areas offered so the relationship between C1 and C2 indicates that art, design and performing arts are the highest recruiting subject areas

and architecture, combined studies, maths and IT and engineering and technology are the lowest recruiting subject areas in the sample of course pages (Tables 26 and 27).

Table 26 Course 1 by size of institution

	Size 1	Size 2	Size 3	Size 4	Total
Architecture, Building and Planning				1	1
Art & Design, Performing Arts	6	4	18	23	51
Business & Administrative Studies	9	12	5	4	30
Combined		1	2		3
Education		2	6	1	9
Engineering & Technology		3	3	3	9
Humanities	7	12	5	3	27
Mathematical Sciences, IT & Computing	1	1	1	1	4
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science	1	2	2	6	11
Science	7	7	4	4	22
Social, Economic, Political, & Legal Studies	2	7	5	2	16
Subjects Allied to Medicine	3	7	4	4	18
Grand Total	36	58	54	52	201

Table 27 Course 2 by size of institution (all course 2s are lowest recruiting subject areas and are only in HEIs)

	1	2	3	4	Total
Architecture, Building and Planning	9	9	1		19
Art & Design, Performing Arts	4	6	3	6	19
Business & Administrative Studies		4	7	1	12
Combined	4	6			10
Education	6	7	4		17
Engineering & Technology	4	2	4		10
Humanities	3	6	3	1	13
Mathematical Sciences, IT & Computing	1	4	4		9
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science	2	4	2		8
Science	1	1	1		3
Social, Economic, Political, & Legal Studies		3	4	2	9
Subjects Allied to Medicine	1	4	4	1	10
Grand Total	35	56	37	11	139

Table 28 looks at course popularity by institution type and reveals that art, design and performing arts are more often the highest recruiting subject areas in more non-HEIs than HEIs in the sample. Table 29 shows that architecture; art and design, performing arts; education; and humanities are the four largest among lowest recruiting subject areas.

Table 28 Course 1 by type of institution (highest recruiting subject areas in HEIs and non-HEIs)

	HEI	Non-HEI	Total
Architecture, Building and Planning	1		1
Art & Design, Performing Arts	21	30	51
Business & Administrative Studies	25	5	30
Combined	3		3
Education	8	2	10
Engineering & Technology	4	4	8
Humanities	26	1	27
Mathematical Sciences, IT & Computing	3	1	4
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science	5	6	11
Science	18	4	22
Social, Economic, Political, & Legal Studies	11	5	16
Subjects Allied to Medicine	14	4	18
Grand Total	139	62	201

Table 29 Course 2 (lowest recruiting subject areas in HEIs only)

	no of institutions
Architecture, Building and Planning	19
Art & Design, Performing Arts	19
Business & Administrative Studies	12
Combined	10
Education	17
Engineering & Technology	10
Humanities	13
Mathematical Sciences, IT & Computing	9
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science	8
Science	3
Social, Economic, Political, & Legal Studies	9
Subjects Allied to Medicine	10
Grand Total	139

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