



SPA Report on Admissions Tests used by Higher Education Institutions

June 2007

Contents:

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction – SPA: The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme
3. Background
4. SPA methodology and research into admissions tests
5. What are admissions tests?
6. What makes a 'good' admissions test?
7. Why are HEIs using admissions tests?
8. What admissions tests are being used?
 - 8.1 Generic tests (being piloted via testing bodies)
 - 8.2 'National' tests for subjects (developed by testing bodies or with an HEI/group of HEIs)
 - 8.3 Institutions' own tests (some institution devised, some devised by or with testing bodies)
9. What could be used instead of admissions tests?
10. Issues for consideration
11. Further work and developments

1. Executive Summary

A number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) use admissions or aptitude tests to complement the existing UK qualifications and skills required for entry. It is particularly but not exclusively high demand subjects where differentiation between high achieving applicants is the most difficult. Additional information, including the admissions test result, is used in the holistic assessment of the applicant as part of the decision making process.

This report defines what is meant by an admissions test, and what makes a 'good' admissions test. It highlights why they are being used, the different types and numbers of tests being used, briefly looks at alternatives to testing (mainly related to changes to the English 14-19 curriculum at this stage) and further issues for exploration in this complex and diverse area.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme was established in 2006 originating from a recommendation in the 2004 Report '*Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice*', which was the outcome of the request by Charles Clarke, the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, to Professor Steven Schwartz to lead an independent review of the options that English higher education institutions should consider when assessing the merit of applicants for their courses. *[Note: Although the Schwartz report referred to England, HEIs in other administrations in the UK have taken forward the principles]*

2.2 SPA works closely with higher education institutions, schools and colleges and other stakeholders. It leads on the development of fair admissions, providing an evidence base and guidelines for good practice and helping higher education institutions maintain and enhance excellence in admissions, student recruitment and widening participation across the UK higher education sector. The programme is independent, funded by all the UK higher education funding councils/bodies and comprises a small team of four who have a combined experience of over 50 years in admissions. The SPA website highlights the research, good practice and professionalism identified by SPA from visits and activities including information about current admissions tests used by universities and colleges of higher education. Website: www.spa.ac.uk.

2.3 The SPA Steering Group chaired by Sir Muir Russell (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Glasgow) consists of a wide range of representatives from Universities UK, GuildHE, UCAS - the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, the HE Academy, UK government (including each of the devolved administrations) and HE funding councils, Association of Colleges, the pre-HE sector and the HE sector (including expert admissions practitioners). The SPA team is in regular contact with senior staff across all the UK administrations and education, learning and HE funding bodies and departments. Although the SPA Programme is based at UCAS and values the synergy of working closely with UCAS staff, it is **not** part of UCAS.

3. Background

One early objective for the SPA Programme was to audit the use of admissions tests in the UK, and consider issues relating to their rationale, purpose and validity from HE perspectives and issues to do with the costs, manageability and impact on the 16-19 curriculum for schools and colleges from pre-HE perspectives with regards to good practice. A progress report has been received by the SPA Steering Group and details are on the SPA website. This report is based on that report and SPA's continuing work in this area.

4. SPA methodology and research into admissions tests

4.1 The SPA website www.spa.ac.uk/resources/admissions-tests gives details of those tests currently being used by HEIs for 2008 entry or being piloted/ researched, these pages will be updated by SPA as more details are available.

4.2 In the year to June 2007 SPA has visited over 60 HEIs throughout the UK to explore good practice in admissions and, where tests are used, review their use with HEIs. This covered

- The purpose and function of tests for admissions/aptitude, how they are being used, developed and evaluated and how the HEI uses the tests to predict/correlate with undergraduate success (if in fact they do this) and can demonstrate the tests are relevant, reliable and valid.
- Raising awareness of alternatives to admissions tests coming on stream e.g. unit grades/ UMS marks for A levels from the Awarding Bodies, developments within the 14-19 curriculum in the UK etc
- Ensuring awareness of fairness, widening participation /access and equality of opportunity issues, e.g. that a test is fit for purpose whatever qualifications the applicant is studying/has studied post 16.
- Exploring the implications for applicants of additional tests and the timing/cost of tests; and that this should be considered when using/developing tests.
- Encouraging better transparency, communications and dissemination of information about admissions tests by HEIs, emphasising the need for professional good practice.

SPA has also explored with schools and colleges issues to do with the costs to both applicants and schools and colleges, the manageability of the tests for both applicants and schools and colleges, including timing and where tests are to be taken. Any impact on the 16-19 curriculum for schools and colleges has been discussed, as has equality of opportunity, widening participation and the impact of tests on applicant behaviour in terms of choice of course and/or institution.

4.3 The methodology used in researching admissions tests includes:

- web and literature searches (mainly UK based at this stage) for reports on tests and testing
- how HEIs provide information to potential applicants as to how and when tests are used and the usefulness of this
- review of data collected for 2008 entry via 'web-link courses', the web interface HEIs use to input their courses data into the UCAS database for Course Search
- discussions with testing bodies, HEI staff both academic and administrative, advisers of applicants in schools and colleges and careers/HE advisers, both by visiting institutions/ companies and by feedback from workshops run by SPA on admissions tests at various conferences and events.

Progress made by SPA includes meetings at HEIs, and with test bodies and stakeholders. This work is continuing with further contact needed with HEIs to establish, if possible, the full extent of tests of various types in use and the approval and quality control mechanisms used.

5. What are Admissions Tests?

5.1 An **admissions test has been defined** by SPA 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.

5.2 The **type of test** used depends predominantly on the course and the attributes deemed appropriate for the professional, vocational or academic discipline. They can be aptitude tests, essay writing exercises, problem solving tests, critical thinking assessments, subject specific tests, cognitive and non-cognitive tests. Many tests are designed to enable a correlation to be made between test results and degree success; that is they are designed to be predictive as well as testing aptitude; this will require long term study and analysis.

5.3 The tests can be in the summer /autumn in the academic year before admission or at interview, normally from November onwards in the academic year before admission. A test can be an HEI's own devised test or a test devised by an HEI or group/consortium of HEIs with one or more testing/Awarding Bodies. A test may be used by one HEI for one or more subjects or may be used by many HEIs for the same subject.

5.4 In analysing **how HEIs describe tests** as part of the decision making process it is not always clear how they define an admissions test. For example an institution may have elements of the interview process which they do not always describe as tests, but which are in fact short tests within the admissions cycle. On the other hand an HEI may state it has a test but it could for example require a piece of music that has been well rehearsed to be played at audition. This latter example would not fall into the SPA definition of a test. These differences in definition may create confusion on the part of applicants and advisers as to what is being required of applicants. Clarity and transparency in how HEIs describe their entry and decision making processes in this area is required.

5.5 SPA's definition of a test has been an unseen written test, however tests could also describe auditions for voice, instrument or performance in dance or drama, portfolio assessment, manual dexterity tests (for example for dentistry or various therapy courses) or the reading a piece of text prior to/in interview and discussing it in interview. These have been excluded from SPA's work in this area. HEIs are increasingly trying to be transparent in what they require and UCAS 'web-link courses' may need to be expanded or clarified as to what should be included as a test and what as part of an interview or audition etc.

5.6 The **number of admissions tests** in use in the UK is shown on the SPA website, www.spa.ac.uk In summary:

No.	Tests
2	'Generic' tests being piloted or researched in the UK (SAT and uniTEST)
5	'National' tests devised by test bodies or with an HEI or group of HEIs (UKCAT; BMAT, LNAT, STEP and GAMSAT – although the latter is for graduates to accelerated Medicine courses)
15	University of Cambridge 'institutions own test' (some devised by the HEI and some with or by test bodies)
20	University of Oxford 'institutions own test' (some devised by the HEI and some with or by test bodies)
15	Other universities and colleges 'Institutions own tests' (some devised by the HEI and some with or by test bodies)
57	Total

Of the 'national' tests, the numbers of HEIs using the tests are:

Test	Number of HEIs using the test by subject
BMAT	Medicine 4; Physiological Sciences 1; Veterinary Medicine 2
GAMSAT	Medicine 5; Dentistry 1 (<i>All but one are for graduate entry to undergraduate/accelerated programmes</i>)
LNAT	Law 11
STEP	Mathematics 2
UKCAT	Medicine 23; Graduate Entry Medicine 5; Dentistry 8

The total number of UK institutions in the UCAS scheme for 2008 entry is currently 311, the number of institutions currently using one or more tests is 45, or 14%.

This may seem a large number of tests, however, there were only two new tests last year, the national UKCAT and the 'institutions own test', HPAT, at the University of Ulster. To date the only new test confirmed for 2008 entry is the English Literature Admissions Test at Oxford, and possibly a new version PPE test at Oxford. One test is no longer being used, the MSAT, for graduates applying for undergraduate courses in Medicine.

The number of 'institutions own tests' is mainly due to the fact that institutions are now asked to declare if they use tests when completing the annual update of entry requirements on the UCAS 'web-link courses' website and institutions are endeavouring to be more transparent in what they require for admissions. There has not been a phenomenal growth in the number of tests, many have been in use for a number, if not many years, it is only with developing good practice that they are now being more well publicised via UCAS and HEI printed/web based materials. However, it is clear that in the current education environment tests are likely to be around for some time.

6. What makes a 'good' admissions test?

6.1 SPA's statement on what comprises a 'good' admissions test is that:

A test should have rigorous validation and reliability testing; be supported by statistical and research evidence; ensure the minimum of bias in the test questions so the test is valid for applicants from all backgrounds in a UK context; should be readily available and accessible to

those with evidence of special requirements in a timely way; provide exemplar materials and tests with answers; be fairly and professionally administered and be able to demonstrate it is fit for purpose and add value as part of holistic decision making.

6.2 If a fee is charged for a test consideration should be given by the HEI and/or test body to providing a fee waiver or bursary to applicants from widening participation backgrounds. Many tests do offer such a waiver or bursary.

6.3 HEIs may wish to consider if, as part of their outreach, schools and colleges liaison and widening participation activities, they should provide potential students from a widening participation background with sessions for 'familiarisation' with the test.

7. Why are HEIs using admissions tests?

7.1 One key argument to explain why more tests have been developed is to aid differentiation between the most able applicants, particularly brought about due to concerns over the increasing numbers of candidates gaining high grades in level 3 qualifications, for example the increasing number of A grades at A level.

7.2 A number of HEIs/test bodies argue that their test assists with 'widening access'. As all applicants sit the same test it is one element on which applicants can be judged equally. However, there may be issues around access to 'familiarisation' or practice sessions that may negate this assertion.

7.3 Tests may also focus upon skills and aptitudes that are not assessed through academic attainment.

8. What admissions tests are being used?

8.1 Generic Tests. These tests are, in part, a response to the Schwartz report's recommendation for some type of common or generic test of aptitude or potential for HE to avoid the proliferation of tests.

a) SAT validity research study – National Foundation for Educational Research (NfER), funded by the Sutton Trust, DfES and the College Board (USA). This study aims to provide evidence on the ability of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) alongside A levels to predict university outcomes in the UK.

A sample of schools and colleges arranged for a large number of A level students to be tested using a version of the US educational aptitude test, the SAT Reasoning Test in the autumn of 2005. This test was owned and provided by the College Board in the USA and developed for them by Educational Testing Service (ETS). NfER arranged the testing exercise, liaised with schools to organise the testing, collected the test papers and gathered background data. 9,207 students took the test which was 3 hours 45 minutes long, excluding breaks. The scoring of the tests was arranged and funded by the College Board, who provided the results back to NfER for onward transmission to the schools. NfER also set up a database of the students involved

to allow a longitudinal validity study to be conducted. Following the administration of the SAT, a questionnaire survey in spring 2006 of participating students was undertaken, 6,825 students completed the questionnaire and are to be followed up through the study on an individual basis.

The research is being undertaken in association with The Sutton Trust, who provide support and liaison with universities and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).. The SAT work is still in its pilot phase; no HEIs are currently using the test as part of their decision making process on applications.

The initial Phase 1 report of the project (November 2006) is available from NfER at <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/outlines/the-use-of-an-aptitude-test-in-university/a-validity-study-of-the-use-of-an-aptitude-test-in-university-entrance.cfm>

These findings can be summarised as:

- Compared with all 16-18 year olds entered for GCE/VCE A levels, students from independent schools and grammar schools were over-represented in the sample and further education (FE) colleges were under-represented.
- Students with lower mean GCSE scores are under-represented in the sample compared with the national population of 17-year-olds taking two or more A levels.
- Of those students for whom data was available, 83% were white, 9% were Asian/Asian British and 8% were from other ethnic groups.
- 4% of students in the sample were eligible for free school meals and 3% had special educational needs.
- SAT scores were generally related to a number of background and socio-economic factors including gender, ethnicity, the level of parental education and parental occupation.
- The mean total SAT scores of the English sample were slightly lower than the US means, but individual SAT items functioned in a similar way across the two countries.

More details are available in the DfES Research Report 846, produced by NfER, *Use of an Aptitude Test in University Entrance – a Validity Study: relationships between SAT scores, attainment measures and background variables*, which was published on 31 May 2007. See brief summary: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB846.pdf> or full report: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR846.pdf>

- b) uniTEST** – developed by Cambridge Assessment with ACER – the Australian Council for Educational Research. The test sample for uniTEST in many ways reflected the SAT test sample, with high-performing students from high-performing schools over-represented. Test numbers were small; of 1,589 students that took the test in May/June 2006 the sample size of those progressing to one of pilot institutions in September/October 2006 was around 300. The test was two and a half hours. uniTEST encouraged HEIs in the pilot to undertake additional test sessions of newly arrived students in November 2006 to get the overall sample size up to 450-600 for follow up; there is also the issue of whether testing first year University, rather than school/college, students is comparable.

uniTEST is still in its pilot phase; no HEIs are currently using the test as part of their decision making process on applications, but this is being reviewed. See <http://www.unitest.org.uk/>

8.2. 'National' tests for subjects developed by test bodies with an HEI or group of HEIs and those developed by test/awarding bodies

a) LNAT – National Test for Law – A group of 11 HEIs with Pearson VUE.

- The LNAT consortium of Law department staff at the HEIs and Pearson Vue, the computer-based testing organisation, are reviewing the research they require about the test. SPA has a meeting with the Chair of the consortium in June 2007 to discuss what evidence there is to date of rigorous validation and reliability testing/research.
- There is evidence from some HEIs using the test that they use it as part of holistic assessment of applicants. It is an extra piece of information which may give benefit to widening participation students, with reasonable GCSE and A level predictions, who otherwise would be rejected but with a good test scores are interviewed and/or made an offer.
- See <http://www.lnat.ac.uk/> The cost of the test for applicants in the UK last year was £40 and the test was two hours.

b) UKCAT – Clinical Aptitude Test for Medicine and Dentistry - HEI consortium of 26 HEIs with Pearson VUE

SPA has confirmed with the Consortium that the test developed for year one was mainly 'off the shelf' (USA) with some extra input by a UK based company, but the main part of test was a well used/validated one. UKCAT are currently exploring validation and reliability testing/research to cover such areas as any bias in the testing due to qualification type, socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, special requirements/ disability etc. See <http://www.ukcat.ac.uk/home/>

The Consortium has three working groups:

- Research and statistics
- Test Development
- Test Delivery /administration

All three have membership including academic and administrative staff from a number of the HEIs involved.

- The test fee is the main funding contributing to the cost of the administration and research for the test. The test cost for 2008 entry is £60 from June to August but increases to £75 in the key test period from 1 September to 10 October.
- The test may well be different for 2008 entry as UKCAT expect to include an additional section of some trial material on non-cognitive testing. How this will be handled is still being finalised.
- 18,000 students took the test in 2006; the expected number in 2007 taking the test for 2008 entry is 21,000. The test is two hours.

c) BMAT – BioMedical Admissions Test - HEI consortium with Cambridge Assessment

There is evidence of validation and reliability testing/research having been carried out over a considerable period. These reports are available on the Cambridge Assessment website.

The test was developed by Cambridge and Oxford universities with Cambridge Assessment. See <http://www.bmat.org.uk/index.html>

- The group of HEIs meets regularly with Cambridge Assessment to discuss test development, research and administration, this meeting includes academics and administrative staff.
- The cost of the test to applicants in the UK up to 28 September is £27.30, after that the cost until the deadline of 11 October is £54. The test is two hours.

d) GAMSAT – Graduate Australian Medical School Admissions Test – ACER

GAMSAT is a professionally designed and marked selection test developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for some medical schools offering graduate-entry (but **not** postgraduate) programmes and is open to graduates of any discipline. The purpose of GAMSAT is to assess ability to understand and analyse material, to think critically about issues and, in the case of the Written Communication section, to organise and express thoughts in a logical and effective way. GAMSAT questions are based on material drawn from a variety of sources. They typically require candidates to read and think about a passage of writing, to interpret graphical displays of information, to use mathematical relationships and to apply reasoning skills to tables of data. Problem solving is a major focus of the test.

If a candidate's first degree is in a non-scientific field of study they can still sit GAMSAT and be chosen for admission to the graduate-entry programmes. A science background is not a prerequisite and academic excellence in the humanities and social sciences is encouraged and recognised. However, it must be stressed that success in GAMSAT is unlikely without knowledge and ability in the biological and physical sciences.

- See <http://www.gamsatuk.org/> The tests is five and a half hours.
- The cost of the test to applicants for the GAMSAT in 2007 is £188.

e) MSAT Medical School Admissions Test – ACER

Was last used for 2007 entry for graduates applying for entry to graduate-entry Medicine programmes at some HEIs. All medical/dental schools previously using MSAT (that is Kings College London, Queen Mary's London and Warwick) have moved to using UKCAT from 2008 entry onwards.

f) STEP Sixth Term Examination Papers in Mathematics - OCR

This is an OCR Awarding body devised examination. The specification is based on material common to GCE A-level Mathematics. Three papers are used to supplement GCE A-level in assessing applicant's aptitude to study Mathematics at HE level. Applicants are required to sit two papers only which are of three hours each. STEP is used by the University of Cambridge and occasionally by Warwick University. The examinations are taken in June just after A levels. See

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/SixthTermExaminationPaperMathematicsI.html>

8.3 Institutions' own tests – pre-interview/decision or at interview

The SPA website details those tests at HEIs that have been input into UCAS 'web-link courses' for 2008 entry or where details have been provided by the HEIs directly. This includes the long standing tests used at

- Cambridge (see <http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/tests/>)
- Oxford (see <http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk/courses/criteria.shtml>)
- as well as new tests such the HPAT, the Health Professions Admissions Test used only at the University of Ulster and developed by ACER. See <http://www.hpat.org.uk/>

Most of these tests do not charge a fee although the HPAT was £90 in 2007.

9. What could be used instead of admissions tests?

SPA will be disseminating information regarding a number of initiatives and alternatives to the use of admissions tests, including discussing with HEIs their use of unit grades/ UMS marks at A level from the Awarding Bodies, and in the longer run for other UK qualifications, the introduction of the new Diplomas, the changes in the 14-19 Curriculum to A levels – stretch and challenge, the new A* grade at A level, wider use of Advanced Highers and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Some of these may be more applicable in certain administrations of the UK than the UK as a whole.

10. Issues for further consideration

10.1 Familiarisation versus coaching. No HEI advocates the use of coaching although some test bodies do offer sessions on familiarity and practice with books or web based material available for sale. Many HEIs indicate that ‘familiarisation’ or practice of the freely available test materials on the web, preferably with the opportunity of guidance and discussion with teachers, fellow students in a group, advisers and/or parents should be adequate preparation. How much time should be spent on familiarisation and practice papers has been discussed. One suggestion for a generic test of one and a half to two hours was that about 10 hours practice using freely available papers would suffice. SPA is aware that some state schools and colleges are paying (for example with Aimhigher funds) for some of their students to attend coaching courses through commercial organisations. A proposal for consideration would be for HEIs to do more through their widening participation, outreach, student recruitment or schools and colleges liaison activities to advise widening participation applicants regarding practice for the tests using the free test papers etc. Indeed it has also been suggested that HEIs could offer preparation/ familiarisation sessions themselves as part of outreach to support applicants.

10.2 Holistic assessment. How many HEIs really use the test as part of an evidenced based well defined holistic assessment? Do they really look at all the evidence on an application such as how many A*s at GCSE, personal statement/ experience, reference, interview, submitted written work etc as well as contextual information such as the quality of the school attended in terms of its achievements at GCSE or equivalent and/or A level or equivalent to see how the applicant compares with the school achievements; attendance at a summer school, and special factors needing consideration e.g. death of close relative, disability etc? The answer for some courses at many HEIs and, in a few HEIs, for all or most courses, is **yes**; it is unlikely that applicants will be rejected on the test scores alone, but this is not always transparent to applicants and HE advisers. HEIs need to consider further making their entry criteria and how the test results fit in to these, more transparent and easy to access, through Entry Profiles or similar means, for applicants.

It is acknowledged that the weightings between the entry criteria and exact formula for rank orders of applicants etc may vary slightly from year to year and will not appear on websites etc. This may initially seem to lack transparency to the applicants and their advisers but does avoid confusion year on year.

10.3 If an HEI that interviews applicants being considered for an offer uses the test results, in conjunction with the information on the application, to reject an applicant before interview, it is their right to do so, provided it is made clear in the publicity materials/on the website how the test result is used as part of their selection and entry criteria.

10.4 The debate of subject specific versus generic tests is still to be had, the two main generic tests – SAT and uniTEST – are still in the validation and/or research stage in the UK. The only other generic type test, the TSA, is an academic aptitude test currently only used at Cambridge. As yet there is not a sufficiently wide evidence base and research into its reliability and validity has been and continues to be undertaken by Cambridge Assessment.

10.5 How could opportunities to discuss many of these issues with regard to tests with applicants/prospective applicants and with their teachers and advisers be taken forward in a manageable way? Many issues relate to the need to change perceptions as well as disseminating the basic facts; good practice guidance on how best to provide applicants with the facts in transparent and easy to use ways would be helpful to HEIs. The SPA website will help take this forward. More information from HEIs could be included in the Entry Profiles on the UCAS website and in university and college publicity materials and web sites as to how tests are used within the admissions decision making process to give greater transparency for applicants and HE advisors.

10.6 Fee exemption, fee bursary and fee remission – most tests with fees offer some support to those applicants who can demonstrate need or meet the criteria set by the test body for fee remission. There are issues as to transparency to ensure those eligible take them up. Evidence is needed as to whether the test cost overall, in terms of time and money, puts applicants off applying to courses with tests or if applicants view a test as another way to demonstrate their aptitude for the subject.

There is a cost to HEIs in testing, in terms of direct and indirect costs e.g. paying for the test development and research (although much of this is paid for by the test fee). There are also costs in processing and matching results, providing tutors with results lists and other statistics, in some HEIs there is the cost of setting, printing, mailing/delivery and marking of tests or part of the tests (e.g. the essay element) etc.

10.7 Some tests take place on the last Wednesday in October or first Wednesday in November, this has issues for some schools and colleges of opening, organising and administering the test during half term. The ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders) have written to Cambridge Assessment with regard to BMAT, and Oxford University with regard to their tests on that date, to request consideration that the date be brought forward in future.

11. Further work and developments

11.1 SPA's work in this area will be further refined and developed when the issues raised have been analysed further, and following further research into institutions own tests.

11.2 The commercial aspects and impact of the test bodies in test development has caused concern in some quarters.

11.3 SPA is working with the HE-sector led Delivery Partnership on improving the HE applications process and with UCAS to encourage greater development by HEIs of Entry Profiles. These will assist applicants in finding out more about the wider entry criteria and decision making process for particular courses. Clear definitions, transparency of policy and process are vital if applicants are to be aware of, and understand, what is required of them. Admissions tests are only one factor in the holistic assessment of applicants based on the data within the UCAS application and any other relevant information.

11.4 The issues around undergraduate admissions and admissions tests are increasingly sophisticated and complex. The tests have been devised to assist HEIs in making increasingly difficult decisions on which are the best applicants to admit. There is overall evidence of good practice and an increasing amount of work being carried out on validity and reliability studies. SPA's role is not to make judgements but to work with HEIs on developing good practice and professionalism within HEIs for ensuring that admissions tests meet the institutions quality standards, and are unpinning by qualitative and quantitative research into their reliability and validity as part of the admissions policy and process. SPA will continue its work regarding admissions tests and develop and share the good practice as guidelines that can be considered by all HEIs using tests throughout the UK.

Janet Graham, Director of SPA,
Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme

Tel: 01242 544891

Email: enquiries@spa.ac.uk

Web: www.spa.ac.uk

June 2007