

The following review plan topics were developed in collaboration with practitioners from 35 different HE providers working in groups at the SPA conference on 10 June 2014 and are based around three admissions infrastructure themes: [admissions policy](#); [planning and managing admissions](#); [effective admissions operation](#). Presentations from workshops, and SPA's accompanying good practice statements on these themes, are available on [SPA's website](#).

Communication of target setting and adhering to the targets	Visibility of admissions policy to applicants and staff	Setting entry criteria / requirements	Structure / organisation
Student involvement	Communication with applicants	Interviews and/or auditions and/or portfolios	Academic consistency
Internal communications	Staff training and CPD	Turnaround times	References
Documentation	Contingency for Clearing	Applicant Experience	Contextualised admissions
IT systems / technology and processes	Staffing levels	Decision and offer making	Incomplete applications

theme	topic/aspect to review	review methods	engagement/communication needed	measures/assessment	additional notes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy	Communication of target setting and adhering to the targets	Plot process flow, noting how information on targets is channelled internally and identify barriers to communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External bodies Interdepartmental Meetings with heads of departments to define clear goals/targets Planning Admissions data analysts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and update communication flowchart to ensure key processes for targets link to all key engagement contacts Evaluate key stakeholder satisfaction – aim for improvement year-on-year Measure improvements in setting and hitting targets Check reporting / question staff at different stages of the year to check their targets match centre's 	
		Meet with key stakeholders to gain their perceptions and concerns			
		Explore means/methods of communication to tackle the problem			
		Analyse staff guidance, procedural manuals and training			
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with applicants Visibility of admissions policy Academic consistency Documentation Staff training 			

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theme	topic/aspect to review	review methods	engagement/communication needed	measures/assessment	additional notes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Visibility of admissions policy to applicants and staff	Discuss, identify and agree the purpose of the policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who is it for? (e.g. applicants / staff) • what is it for? (e.g. reference for all admissions / reference when something goes wrong – complaints) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • central and devolved / departmental admissions staff • recruitment / schools and colleges' liaison staff • internal admissions group • Policy / Quality staff • SPA - Good Practice Statement on Admissions Policies • QAA - B2 Quality Code 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check published policy is up-to-date. How often depends on content / changes • Mark against SPA's checklist • Evaluate pre or post QAA HE review for how well Expectation is met 	Establish who has ownership of the policy and who is responsible for maintaining it
		Benchmark against other HEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of Admissions at other HEPs / their websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Score against agreed criteria (ease of accessibility; comprehension; content) 	
		Feedback from staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of policy • views on its importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • central and devolved / departmental admissions staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakdown any issues identified into FAQs, with links to main policy, to raise awareness • Survey staff and note any improvement in levels of awareness 	
		Feedback from applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of policy • importance of accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment / schools and colleges' liaison staff • applicants (to survey directly) or teachers in key schools / colleges (to survey indirectly) • Feedback from recruitment / schools and colleges' liaison staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count hits on website and check if there are higher volumes at particular times of year • Satisfaction from student focus groups • Survey responses 	
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation • Communication with applicants • Staff training 			

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<input type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy	Setting entry criteria / requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis / interrogation and modelling (compare to previous years) Compare previous years' entry requirements to actual grades achieved on entry (both exceeded and missed requirements) Analyse conversion rates Review competitors' criteria / requirements Benchmarking research Review current student performance to identify any correlation with / variance across specific qualifications, subjects or grades (or combinations) – ensure entry standards support teaching and learning Test equivalencies, utilising competitor, UCAS and own student data Impact analysis on WP / disadvantaged groups – check against access / outcome agreements Responses to acceptors' and decliners' surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning / admissions data analysts Academic staff Central and devolved / departmental admissions staff Marketing and market research recruitment / schools and colleges' liaison staff WP Senior management team Partners and schools/colleges Course enquiries team International office (and agents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on all information / data reviewed to be appraised by admissions committee, SMT or similar empowered body Rise/decline in applications and firm/insurance rates Improved matching of applicant to requirements – greater proportion of CFs meet offer Feedback from applicants on satisfaction / expectations met based on published entry requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> benchmark against UCAS end of cycle data (UCAS 'reasons for declining offers' analysis shows trend of steep decline in 'unrealistic entry requirements' as a reason for declining) Improved retention rates / decline in drop-out due to academic ability 	<p>Ensure publication of set criteria is consistent in all publications (UCAS, website, in-house systems).</p> <p>Transparency, including for "exceptional changes"</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree strategy – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the rationale for change? Is it viable? Examine reputation drivers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally, nationally and internationally 			

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider external changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sector changes, e.g. removal of SNC, Tariff changes/updates • changes in schools/colleges curriculum (including their funding / provision of qualification type and volume) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction from key schools / colleges (communicated directly or via schools and colleges' liaison staff) 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of prospectus, website, etc. • Ease / clarity of expressing entry requirements externally • Competitor marketing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant satisfaction rates for quality/accuracy of published information • Improved institutional knowledge of requirements • Correct information at the time of application 	
		<p>Link to topics on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation • Staff training • Academic consistency 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy	Structure / organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review admissions processing statistics (including turnaround times) across different organisational provision (departments / modes of study / levels of study / fee status) – consider any variation / inconsistency Benchmark against other HE providers, including possible site visits (sharing good practice) Plot timeline and workflow for admissions cycle, highlighting stresses / periods where staff cover both urgent and vulnerable Focus groups of admissions staff and academic staff (what we do and don't do well, for staff and for institution). SWOT analysis on focus group results then action plan for what next. Responses to acceptors' and decliners' surveys Refer to SPA - Good Practice Guidance on What makes an effective admissions operation Impact analysis on both HEP and applicant, particularly on WP / disadvantaged groups – check against access / outcome agreements Feedback on current practice, thoughts on improvements and involvement throughout any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic departments to engage – building trust Senior management team Communication of any new structure to those directly involved, wider departments and academic schools Recommendations in light of feedback International team (if not included in the admissions team) WP Other areas that work alongside admissions at different times of the year Change in turnaround times matched to improvement elsewhere (e.g. conversion rate; consistency; SLAs; staff satisfaction; applicant satisfaction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost savings without any detriment to service, standards and professionalism Staff turnover rates, plus identification of support/cover when staff leave, and time required for new staff to become proficient (checking availability of procedural manuals, training and peer support/mentoring) Feedback from other departments on quality of admissions service Applicants report being better informed, or fewer queries and complaints from applicants and their advisors Senior management report feeling better informed and more confident in admissions organisation (including provision of application data) Better management of conversion; increased confidence ahead of Confirmation / Clearing Formal review of structure over 2 years against original target set for change Drives development – promotion of new opportunities as a result of structure (that would not be possible under other structures) 	

theme	topic/aspect to review	review methods	engagement/communication needed	measures/assessment	additional notes
		change from admissions team(s) involved			
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing levels • Turnaround times • Staff training 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Student involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student focus groups • Student representatives on admissions groups • Feedback from student ambassadors, pre-entry peer mentors and other student helpers at open days, visits, tours, etc. • Responses to acceptors' and decliners' surveys • Responses to National Student Survey, International Student Barometer and other student-led feedback exercises • Examples of student involvement at other HEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication/engagement with academics about what students already support and could support • NUS / student guild representatives • recruitment / schools and colleges' liaison staff • Admissions practitioners' networks to discuss / share good practice • Satisfaction from student focus groups • Identified student input into policy or operational changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from applicants indicating student involvement has resulted in an improved applicant experience • Improved conversion rates • Improvements to responses on pre-entry sections of NSS and other student-led feedback exercises • New areas identified where students can support admissions / applicants • Students involved feel their role is valued and useful 	Possible student involvement: open events; Clearing support; interviews; process development.
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training 			

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<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	<p>Communication with applicants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a communications audit to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose? • What is sent? • Who sends it? • And when? • What is the best method / combinations? (email, social media, letter, text, chat) • Focus groups to find out what applicants want, what they will respond to, and what their expectations are • Sample communications from other HEPs – ask to share good practice or act as a ‘mystery shopper’ • Use students involved in open days etc. to engage informally with prospects / applicants on communication (yours and others) • Gain formal feedback from prospects / applicants and parents at open days, visits, fairs, etc. • Map communication channels (formal / informal) against admissions cycle • Identify when communication is / should be a “call to action” (prompt to elicit applicants to respond, engage or do something). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note key points in the cycle when they should be used • Identify all other calls to action, including other internal areas (e.g. Accommodation; Student Support; Marketing) and external agencies (e.g. UCAS; SLC) • Consider potential for communication duplication and overload - are there unintended consequences? • Ask students for information about institution and process • Recruitment, outreach, WP • Academics • Schools and colleges • Senior management team • Marketing, Press Office • Planning and market intelligence • Student Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Applicants and prospects • Decliners/accepters • Conversion of mapping/identification exercises into an institution communications plan to ensure coherent approach – monitor and manage throughout year and review annually • Applicant evaluation / feedback on communications • ‘Positive’ comments and increased uptake of new communications • Reduced workload, duplication, costs, etc. and greater efficiency demonstrated through co-ordinated approach • Improved conversion rates 	<p>Organisational structures may need to change to accommodate a co-ordinated communications plan</p>
		<p>Link to topics on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant Experience • Visibility of admissions policy • Interviews • Incomplete applications 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Interviews and/or auditions and/or portfolios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis to identify trends (e.g. for protected characteristics group) Investigate demographics and initial motivators that influence applications Gather feedback from external stakeholders, e.g. careers advisors, and colleges/schools who supply students. Obtain their views and brief them on our processes, policy and procedures Gather business and industry perspective for relevant professional courses (e.g. NHS; Law Society; RICS) Identify reference to interviews in accepters and decliners surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions data analysts / Planning External stakeholders, e.g. careers advisors, and colleges/schools Professional, regulatory and statutory bodies (PSRBs) Evaluation from students who have been through the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved academic satisfaction on quality of students Improved conversion rates Improved retention rates Impact on employment success of students Positive applicant feedback on interview experience Positive interviewer feedback on sense of preparedness, value of training / support Increased consistency in recording, reporting and providing feedback Interviews become a lower concern in future equality impact assessments 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the purpose of the interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the HEP and applicant get from it? How do you set expectations with students? Consider the appropriateness of wording / terminology (assessment / interview / audition): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it appropriate to the actual purpose? Could it mislead or unduly deter applicants and their advisors? Review criteria for assessment Assess aspects that could be prone to Unconscious bias, using ECU guidance Consider other options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot 'no interviews'? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of admissions decision makers and/or interviewers Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) SPA - Good Practice Statement on Interviews Liaise with IT team regarding viability of new proposals (e.g. uploading of portfolio etc.; on-line interviews; digital recording of assessments) Engage other departments (academics, marketing) in discussions about consistency and transparency of information and IAG Gather practice and training ideas from HR and staff development / CPD (both general interview training and specific equality and diversity training); plus ask about new alternatives 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a questionnaire to aid selection? • Expand alternatives already offered to certain groups (e.g. international)? 	to consider		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review communication and guidelines to prospective applicants regarding assessments for clarity, accuracy and timeliness – does it set expectations? • Review the interview schedule within the admissions cycle • Evaluate the impact of interviews on turnaround time • Evaluate the usefulness and consistency of post-interview feedback / debriefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Recruitment • Admissions decision makers and/or interviewers • Admissions data analysts / Planning 		
		<p>Link to topics on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation • Staff training • Academic consistency • Communication with applicants • Visibility of admissions policy 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Academic consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessors' meetings with heads of department – investigate any issues Analyse and compare interview report/score forms and feedback. Apply similar internal assurance methods to those applied for student assessment Review reasons for rejection (including feedback if given) Examine levels of understanding of EU/international qualifications (and UK other than A-levels/GCSEs) Discuss with WP and student support to consider any unintended barriers and any academic support / good practice successfully applied in one area/department that could be used elsewhere Impact analysis on WP / disadvantaged groups – check against access / outcome agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academics Other decision makers exercising academic judgement Senior managers (consistency of messages, overarching strategic view) Marketing and WP teams Student support / teaching and learning support / student experience staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced workload, duplication, costs, etc. and greater efficiency demonstrated through co-ordinated, consistent approach Reduction in complaints from applicants and advisors New opportunities to support WP developed Improved staff satisfaction Improved relations between academic and applicant-facing support staff 	
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> internal communications interviews training 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Internal communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff shadowing to identify issues and enhance communication Group discussions / survey involving all staff involved with applicants and enquirers to understand how well actual course content and selection matches the information/advice given Develop an internal communications plan. Plot all internal communications on admissions – identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> who they go to (are academics included?) who is responsible for sending them what responsibility and accountability (if any) is there for reading and acting on communications who ensures consistency across all communication (is there any overarching responsibility?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how effective the communication channels are in getting messages across Look at links between recruitment, marketing and admissions teams to maximise links and sharing of good practice Discuss with colleagues in other HEPs to identify any successful approaches elsewhere Senior managers (consistency of messages, overarching strategic view) Marketing, Recruitment and WP teams Admissions practitioners' networks to discuss / share good practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic departments International team (if not included in the admissions team) Other areas that work alongside admissions at different times of the year Build trust - improved staff satisfaction Improved understanding of courses, course content and selection (evidenced through discussion groups or survey) Improved staff satisfaction and engagement with internal communications on admissions 	Consider when internal communication also needs to be communicated externally – to partners; agents; PSRBs; external interviewers; student ambassadors; school/college advisors
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibility of admissions policy Communication of target setting Staff training 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy	Staff training and CPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing training provision and identify gaps in skills and/or knowledge / additional training needs Discuss and identify the purpose of the training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is it for? (e.g. new staff induction or CPD) What is it for? (e.g. internal versus external training needs - events) Review the timeline for training and consider the key points in the admissions cycle Staff shadowing (both administrative and academic staff) to identify issues and improve learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to SPA's good practice guidance Survey own staff, gain advice from staff development and other training specialists, and seek examples of training practice from other HEPs to identify the most effective form and delivery method for training (e.g. multiple seminars; training days; electronic; compulsory vs voluntary) Senior management buy in to raise the profile of training opportunities/requirements and ensure delivery of training CPD / staff development team to use analysis of training needs and devise change management plan from top to bottom Monthly internal meetings/briefings with staff to provide updates and ensure CPD Devise and disseminate clear guidelines for admissions procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability / equality / counselling and other support teams to advise on equality-specific training Positive feedback from staff Heightened awareness and understanding among staff of respective roles A consistent approach from staff to admissions procedures Positive applicant feedback and reduction in admissions complaints. Improved applicant experience. Staff are better informed - gaps in skills and knowledge have been addressed 	Provision of training for student helpers and other secondary admissions contacts will also need review.
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibility of admissions policy Communication of target setting Interviews Contingency for Clearing 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy	Turnaround times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct thorough investigation and identify pros and cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree institution-level definition of turnaround time - N.B. consider variations to submission times (e.g. UCAS-to-HEP lag; incomplete applications); additional non-academic assessment (e.g. fee status; criminal convictions); and whether turnaround is to first contact (e.g. acknowledgement of receipt), notification of further assessment (e.g. interview) or actual offer Identify what elements affect turnaround times Establish and clearly communicate the intended purpose behind setting/monitoring turnaround times Examine the evidence base for that intended purpose Examine decliners and accepters' surveys for mention of speed/delay of response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review team structure and transferable skills to manage peak periods Investigate the application-to-staff-ratio Admissions data analysts / Planning – to examine any correlation between turnaround time and conversion Recruitment, outreach, WP, plus schools and colleges – to qualify and add reason/rationale to any correlation Senior management – to establish buy-in and decide any KPIs and/or SLAs Admissions decision makers and processers – for training and awareness raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on conversion rates Impact on staff morale Improved management of staff workload and time, including over peak periods Improved efficiency 	
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure / organisation Decision and offer making 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	References	<p>Establish the purpose of the reference and evaluate its usefulness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the reference inform selection? • What value does it add? • Are there any alternatives? • Consider staff time spent on references. Is this an effective and efficient use of time and resources? • Monitor reasons for rejection (and feedback if given) to determine when the reference has influenced the decision (distinguish between predicted grades and descriptive text). • Are there any legal implications? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views of admissions decision makers • HR staff for views / parallels from use for employment purposes, plus for any legal implications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample checking of references shows greater consistency in format and content • Referees are clear about what the HEP expects the reference to contain • Referees and applicants understand how the reference will inform selection • Positive feedback from referees and applicants. Improved applicant experience. 	
		<p>Scrutinise assessment methods for references:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review practice across all application routes (e.g. UCAS; part-time direct; postgraduate direct; short courses) • Review criteria for assessment and agree upon what a 'good' reference should contain. • Identify verification methods for both referee identity and reliability of content – evaluate its value in comparison to other selection criteria. • Examine what happens if a reference is not received. Is practice consistent across the institution? • Determine whether there are any individuals who would not be acceptable as referees (e.g. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency in admissions policy and selection criteria • Views of admissions decision makers • Intelligence from enquiries, schools and colleges' liaison and admissions staff on external perceptions and concerns • International admissions staff 		How do you know if the reference is genuine?

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		<p>family members; any non-academic), or if any are viewed/assessed less favourably. Evaluate the validity of such approaches, how they're communicated and if they are applied consistently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider when in the cycle references should be collected (with application; post-application; post-offer; at all?) – should be linked to purpose and use. • How many references are required and is this consistent across all modes, levels and courses? • Assess whether any groups are advantaged / disadvantaged by reference requirements. 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review communications and guidelines for prospective applicants and advisors regarding references 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of teachers and careers advisors in schools and colleges • Recruitment/schools and colleges' liaison staff • WP • Agents 		
		<p>Link to topics on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision and offer making • Incomplete applications 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	<p>Documentation (internal manuals, policies, and external documents)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a Gap analysis to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> what is currently documented what more needs to be added to existing documentation what more needs to be documented what the risks are if gaps are left unfilled what can be done (plus when and by whom) to fill the gaps Identify and make clear to others who owns the document and who is responsible for updates Keep a log of changes and issues encountered during cycle for end of year review – embed review as ongoing development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole team approach to input and development Staff development / CPD – training development, including ‘bite size’ sessions Senior management – to establish buy-in Policy and Quality Assurance staff Other areas that work alongside admissions at different times of the year External influencers, e.g. PSRBs; partners; UCAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redo Gap analysis to identify where measures have been effective in filling / reducing gaps Staff appraisals indicate improved knowledge, understanding and competence – increased professionalism Impact on staff morale - positive feedback from staff Improved consistency and efficiency 	
<p>Link to topics on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> internal communications training visibility of admissions policy to applicants and staff 					

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<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Contingency for Clearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and gather views / feedback from all involved in previous years to identify what went well or badly – preliminary identification of risk areas • Intelligence from external sources (advisors in schools/colleges; UCAS; admissions practitioners in other HEPs; admissions groups and forums) – identify additional risks previously experienced by others that may impact on you plus new developments identified by others • Use SPA's Considerations for Confirmation and Clearing as a checklist • Conduct a risk assessment / RAG analysis utilising risks gathered from various sources • Review dependencies • Scenario planning • Check levels of awareness amongst staff on what to do in unforeseen events (communication and training) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff involved in Clearing (inc. admissions, IT, Marketing) – establish a Clearing task group (could be virtual) • Senior management – to establish authority across departments and to delegate authority in advance to enact contingency plans as required (including financial authority) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train others to cover single points of failure – plan rotas to ensure cover / backup and make them known • Load testing • Dry run • Review success of contingency planning at end of cycle – feed any lessons learned into next year's risk assessment 	
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal communications • training • documentation • IT systems, technology and processes 			

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Applicant Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map / plot admissions process across the stages of the applicant experience – identify what engagement already takes place (include any devolved, informal and partner engagement) and what gaps exist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a timeline of engagement activity, noting who is responsible Conduct ‘secret shopper’ applications and compare engagement with own practice Gather feedback and analysis pre-/during/post- application SPA – Applicant Experience Strategy Survey key stakeholders (applicants, applicant advisors, students) Identify most common reasons for student non-commencement, drop out and poor performance (may vary across courses) and determine which could be mitigated pre-entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include in HEP mission statement staff across all stages of the Applicant Experience, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central and devolved / departmental admissions Marketing, recruitment, Schools and Colleges’ Liaison, WP Accommodation Office Academics Disability and Student Support Feedback from existing students, accepters and decliners surveys, applicants and their advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in enrolment (conversion rates at each stage) Better matching of those accepted (improved retention and performance) Improved feedback from applicants and their advisors Reduced duplication in communication and elimination of mixed messages given to applicants – both staff and applicants feel better informed 	
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with applicants IT systems, technology and processes 			

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<input type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy	Contextualised admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty / department consultations • Define meaning and criteria (who gets “flagged”) • Identify what data and information is available, including where it is sourced from • Evaluate different possible uses (e.g. learning support; bursaries and financial support; guaranteed consideration / interview / offer; lower offer; additional consideration for near miss at Confirmation; monitoring) • Systems and statistics. Link WP data to administrative/admissions data. • Review external research and examples of use form other HEPs • SPA – information, research and resources on contextualised admissions • Identify how use of contextualised admissions can support HEP mission and strategic aims (consider access/outcome agreements; commitment to equality and diversity; partnerships) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a champion to promote / push agenda • Recruitment, outreach, WP • Academics • Schools and colleges • Senior management team • Marketing, Press Office • Planning and market intelligence • Student Services • Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved market intelligence. Data showing successes. • Retention rates • Value-added measures • Evidence in support of meeting access, outcome and other participation agreements 	
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting entry criteria / requirements • Interviews 			

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<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	IT systems / technology and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current systems and performance and identify strengths and weaknesses. Is it fit for purpose? Discuss and agree upon the functionality required - necessary improvements and 'nice to haves' – and prioritise accordingly Map current processes and workflows Three-way discussion between admissions – IT – senior management to determine priority levels for different processes / times of year Gather evidence from other HE providers on the suitability of different systems and processes (possible visits, sharing good practice) Consider additional training needs/provision Document what is used Explore alternative systems and technology User groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on current systems/technology and suggestions for improvements from admissions staff (and related teams) involved Interdepartmental IT team Keeping up-to-date with communications and developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback from staff – both admissions and IT staff feel better supported, informed, prepared and recognised Greater efficiency Reduced workload and duplication Improved turnaround times Reduced mistakes Streamlined processes Training is up-to-date and consistent 	
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with applicants Structure / organisation Contingency for Clearing Contextualised Admissions Incomplete applications Staff training 			

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<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	<p>Staffing levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictive modelling • Identify goals and expectations from management • Comparative analysis with other HEPs • Workload modelling – include examination of roles / functions – highlight critical functions reliant on few / one staff • Consider efficiencies, structure (e.g. staff tiers / levels and types of responsibility) and skill sets – look for alternatives to offset staff nos. ⇔ application nos. relationship • Identify peaks / high demand / critical pressure points when service could be affected • Review staff assessments for common issues • Agree skill sets for different admissions functions – identify which fare high skill-based and which could be delivered by temporary / seconded staff with basic training – build into contingency planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line managers • Admissions decision makers and processers • Other areas that work alongside admissions at different times of the year – look at potential duplication • Teachers, HE advisors and applicants – is there any external perception of service affected by staffing levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence: continuous documented assessment of workloads and incoming work. • Effect on adherence to admissions deadlines (% meeting deadline), KPIs, SLAs, or reduction in complaints / queries due to delays • Feedback from staff • Staff morale • Overtime. Has it decreased? 	
<p>Link to topics on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure / organisation • Contingency for Clearing • Staff training • Academic consistency • Turnaround times • Interviews • Documentation 					

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation	Decision and offer making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse speed of decision making and turnaround times – correlate with accuracy, consistency and conversion Compare and contrast selecting versus recruiting courses If guidelines exist, review and update against good practice Communications (and consistency of) to stakeholders Case studies Review volume and usefulness of documentation of standard offers Post-enrolment review of offers made Conduct an audit of decisions Benchmark against other HEPs Gather feedback from applicants and advisors (accepters and decliners surveys; focus groups; informal discussion through schools and colleges liaison) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings of academic and admin Circulation internally Transparency on website central and devolved / departmental admissions staff recruitment / schools and colleges' liaison staff Teachers, HE advisors and applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for withdrawal Data analysis of offers and numbers – improved link between offer making and targets Improved conversion rates; plus more convert with expected grades Improved retention and matching ability / aspiration with course Monitoring turnaround times Greater consistency in offer making 	
Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting entry criteria / requirements Communication of target setting Visibility of admissions policy Staff training Academic consistency Turnaround times Interviews Documentation 					

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theme	topic/aspect to review	review methods	engagement/communication needed	measures/assessment	additional notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective Admissions operation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning and Managing admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admissions policy	<p>Incomplete applications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse the number of emails sent to applicants to request information. Calculate time and resources involved. Data analysis - establish trends Get views from other HEPs (and possibly UCAS) to identify if trends are unique to you; common nationally; or common to certain types of course or applicant Identify practice in how incomplete applications are handled. Look at differences across: type of information missing; type of application (e.g. Home vs International; full time vs part time; undergraduate vs postgraduate; direct vs UCAS) Review consistency in guidelines and procedures – and how they're communicated externally Consider alternatives (e.g. data mining for missing data; increased automation and compulsory fields; set deadline dates) Conduct impact analysis to determine whether some groups are more likely to submit incomplete applications. Consider measures to redress any disadvantage. Discuss with schools/colleges (preferably ones identified as having incomplete applications) to identify reasons why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of admissions decision makers Recruitment / schools and colleges' liaison staff Admissions data analysts WP Develop FAQs, help text and improved communications Staff training to ensure consistency UCAS Admissions staff in other HEPs / Admissions practitioners' networks to discuss / share good practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison with previous cycles Decrease in incomplete applications Reduction in time and resources chasing applicants' information Improved conversion from groups / types previously identified as high risk of submitting incomplete applications (i.e. enrolling and progressing students who previously wouldn't have been considered) 	

theme	topic/aspect to review	review methods	engagement/communication needed	measures/assessment	additional notes
		Link to topics on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with applicants • Applicant Experience • Visibility of admissions policy • Academic consistency • Turnaround times • References • Decision and offer making 			

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