Contextualised Admissions Policies and Fair Access
The Case of a Competitive and Research-intensive Institution

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Dr Laurence Lasselle

M Johnson, Dr J McDougall-Bagnall, Dr I Smith

University of St Andrews
Definitions

Contextualised admissions (similar to SPA, forthcoming)

‘additional’ information and data are used in the admissions process, in order to assess an applicant’s prior attainment (academic or otherwise) and potential to succeed in HE in the context of the circumstances in which their attainment is obtained.

Fair access (as Boliver, 2013, p 346)

[all] those who have the potential to benefit from higher education should have the opportunity to do so (DfES, 2003) access to prestigious universities is defined as entry to these universities (Chowdry et al, 2008; Harris, 2010)
Contextualised information and data

important tool for HEIs
should not be limited to WP

Their use

needs to be fully understood by all stakeholders
needs to be ‘meaningful’ for the HEI
requires resources and cultural change
is strongly influenced by the ‘context’

‘policy’ → practice

Contextualised admissions at the University of St Andrews
How its practice evolved from Entry 2008 (UCAS cycle 2007-8) to Entry 2013 (UCAS cycle 2012-13)

A fair and equitable admissions system ‘provides equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of backgrounds, to gain admission to course suited to their ability and aspirations’.

One system fits for all? NO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Among the external factors</th>
<th>Among the institutional factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic &amp; Social</td>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political &amp; Policy-related</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCAS paperless</td>
<td>Type</td>
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Evidence – based? YES
The importance of the context!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Among the external factors</th>
<th>Among the institutional factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase of applications</td>
<td>‘Small’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of funded places</td>
<td>Degree portfolio and highly competitive courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees</td>
<td>Excellence in T&amp;L</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland, RUK, Europe</td>
<td>Research-intensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCAS paperless</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and other stakeholders’ pressure</td>
<td>Decentralised admission decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESA WP benchmarks</td>
<td>benchmarks not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMD20</td>
<td>SIMD20 low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REACH (SFC and five Scottish HEIs)</td>
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Key Research Finding (see Lasselle et al, forthcoming)

Applicants with AAA at Higher from a below average school perform as well at St Andrews as those with AAAA at Higher from an above average school

*New* Measure – Attainment Environment

The secondary school where the applicant took the Highers School average achieving at least AAAA at Higher in the August 2010 prior to the admissions cycle (post-appeal data) less than *Scotland average* achieving at least AAAA at Higher

`MEAN`

‘Below Average’/ ‘Above Average’
Entry requirements
Applications, offers and places
Fees and bursaries
Scottish Government and outcome agreements

Institution – Cultural change
New Principal and workshops on WP
REACH: research on academic potential (Lasselle et al, forthcoming), information analyst, workshop
Teachers together conference 2012

New admission portal
Entry 2008

A1 Mature students
A2 Access courses
A3 Sutton Trust Summer School
A4 Priority school - school with low progression to HE (list is given)
A5 HNC or HND applicant
A6 St Andrews specific access initiative/LEAPS/GOALS
A7 Identified disadvantage
AW Working in Health Access Network Project
A9 Refugee - with recognition by Home Office
Entry 2010

A1 – A9 access codes

SIMD

Pre-HE engagement
WP programmes

School info from Scottish schools on line
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UCAS ID</th>
<th>P.</th>
<th>D.</th>
<th>R.</th>
<th>Status</th>
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**Form Results:**
- Intermediate 1 & 2 Courses Maths, Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100: A (2011)
- Intermediate 1 & 2 Courses Maths, Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100: A (2010)
- SQA Advanced Highers English C270: Incomplete (8 2013)
- SQA Advanced Highers History C259: Incomplete (8 2013)
- SQA Advanced Highers Maths: Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100: Incomplete (8 2013)
- SQA Higher Chemistry C012: A (2012)
- SQA Higher History C259: A (2012)
- SQA Higher Maths: Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100: A (2012)
- Standard Grade Chemistry: 1 (2011)
- Standard Grade English: 1 (2010)
- Standard Grade French: 2 (2011)
- Standard Grade History: 1 (2011)
- Standard Grade Music: 1 (2011)
- Standard Grade Physics: 1 (2011)
- Standard Grade Spanish: 3 (2011)

**Predicted Results:**
- AH: Maths: Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100 = B
- AH: History C269 = B
- AH: English C270 = B

**School Info:**
- Perth Academy
- Murray Place
- Perthshire
- Scotland
- 2007 - 2013

**Widening Participation:**
- A4: LOW PROG
- SCH

**Below average school**
Contextualised information and data

important tool for the University of St Andrews
should not be limited to WP Academic Potential

Their use

needs to be fully understood by all stakeholders (AO, University, SFC, etc. + workshop and training)

needs to be ‘meaningful’ for the HEI (research – data collection and data analysis, ethics and experience)

resources and cultural change (PO support and AO, patience and determination)

‘context’ (limits and steps)

practice → policy
References

Boliver V, 2013, How fair is access to more prestigious universities?, The British Journal of Sociology, 64(2), 344-364


Harris M, 2010, What more can be done to widen access to highly selective universities? London: Office for Fair Access


Schwartz S, 2004, Fair admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for good practice

SPA, forthcoming, Assessing attainment and future potential