CALL FOR EVIDENCE

UNIVERSITIES UK REVIEW OF FAIR ADMISSIONS

STAFF AT SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Please use this document to help prepare your responses before submitting online at:

https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/Pages/fair-admissions-review.aspx

PAGE ONE: ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey, conducted by Universities UK.

This survey includes questions about the fairness and transparency of UK undergraduate admissions processes, and whether they encourage high aspirations. It also includes questions about offer-making, information and guidance, and whether the Schwartz review (2004) principles remain fit for purpose. Please do include examples of your own school's or further education provider's experiences as part of your response.

The information gathered in this survey will inform Universities UK's evidence base for its Fair Admissions Review. Please note that all responses will remain confidential and findings will only be presented at an aggregated level. The Universities UK privacy notice can be found on our website.

The deadline for responses is Monday 9 December 2019. The survey should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions, please contact us on + 44 (0)20 7419 4111 or daniel.wake@universitiesuk.ac.uk.
PAGE TWO: RESPONDENT DETAILS

1. If you are responding on behalf of a school or further education provider, please enter its name. Otherwise, please enter ‘not applicable’:

2. Please confirm the higher education admissions system you are responding about:
   - □ UK-wide
   - □ England only
   - □ Scotland only
   - □ Northern Ireland only
   - □ Wales only

3. Please enter your job title:

4. Please enter your email address:
INTRODUCTION

In June 2003, an independent steering group reviewed the options that English higher education institutions should consider when assessing the merit of applicants for their courses. The group was also asked to report on the high level principles underlying these options. The steering group, chaired by Professor Steven Schwartz, published a report in September 2004 on its findings, which included a set of five principles for the basis of fair admissions:

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

Further reviews have followed, including developments in Scotland where, in 2016, the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) published a report called 'A blueprint for fairness', which included recommendations for universities relating to areas such as transparent admissions policies, delivering a coordinated approach to access and basing entry requirements on a strong educational rationale, and included challenging targets on access. The higher education sector responded through Universities Scotland's 'Working to widen access' report, which had actions on admissions, articulation and bridging programmes.

However, the focus of this survey relates to principles outlined in the Schwartz report. While the report's terms of reference were focused on English institutions, it included over-arching principles that could be adopted by all UK higher education providers. With this in mind, we recognise the distinction of admissions systems across the UK nations and encourage all education providers to respond accordingly.
PAGE FOUR: INFORMED CHOICES

What key information do applicants need in order to make informed choices about higher education during the different stages of the admissions process:

5. Pre-application stage
   *This covers an individual’s consideration of higher education study, including all pre-application activities and interactions with a higher education provider prior to starting a course of study.*

6. Application stage
   *This covers activities from the point a prospective student decides to complete an application to university up to the point where the application is considered by the institution(s) applied to.*

7. Post-application stage
   *This covers activities surrounding an institution’s consideration of an applicant’s submitted application, from the point the application is submitted to when an applicant has been confirmed, or guaranteed, a place of study.*

8. Transition to higher education
   *This covers post-confirmation activities, from the point an applicant’s place has been confirmed through to (and potentially beyond) the commencement of higher education studies.*
PAGE FIVE: OFFER-MAKING

Please outline the key strengths or weaknesses of the following offer types on your education provider’s students, and where there might be room for improvement to promote greater fairness and transparency for applicants:

9. Contextual offers
   An offer made in the context of individual circumstances

10. Unconditional offers
    An offer of a place without needing to meet conditions such as obtaining exam results

11. Conditional unconditional offers
    An offer of a place without needing to meet conditions such as obtaining exam results, but the offer had to be accepted as a firm (first) choice
12. In your experience, do you think undergraduate higher education admissions processes are fair?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure

   Please explain your answer:

13. In your experience, do you think undergraduate higher education admissions processes are transparent?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure

   Please explain your answer:

14. In your experience, do you think undergraduate higher education admissions processes encourage applicants to have high aspirations?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unsure

   Please explain your answer:
Some parts of the admissions system operate differently in different UK nations.

What would be the relative advantages and disadvantages for applicants, providers and schools of the following features of an admissions system?

15. **System A: Pre-qualifications offer-making (available in current system)**, whereby the higher education provider can make offers to applicants before they have achieved their qualifications. Under this system, applicants may apply, receive offers and have their places accepted before receiving their qualifications.

16. **System B: Post-qualifications confirmation (available in current system)**, whereby the higher education provider confirms all applicant places after they have achieved their qualifications. Under this system, some applicants may apply and receive offers before achieving their qualifications, but their place will not be confirmed until they have achieved their qualifications.

17. **System C: Post-qualifications offer-making**, whereby the higher education provider only makes offers to applicants after they have achieved their qualifications. Under this system, some applicants may apply before achieving their qualifications, but will not receive an offer until they have achieved their qualifications.

18. **System D: Post-qualification applications**, whereby applicants apply after they have achieved their course entry requirements. Under this system, applicants cannot apply until they have met the conditions of the course.

19. Other systems, including combinations of the above (please outline).

20. On balance, which of the above features might best operate in the interests of fairness and transparency for applicants while guaranteeing an efficient and effective admissions process? (Tick all that apply.)

   - System A: Pre-qualifications offer-making
   - System B: Post-qualifications confirmation
   - System C: Post-qualifications offer-making
   - System D: Post-qualifications applications
   - Other systems, including combinations of the above (please outline).

Please explain your answer.
21. In your experience, which aspects of undergraduate higher education admissions work well?

22. In your experience, how could undergraduate higher education admissions processes be improved?
Based on your responses and experiences, please suggest whether each *Schwartz report* principle is still valid or needs to be amended:

23. Principle one: A fair admissions system should be transparent.
- □ Still valid
- □ Needs to be amended
- □ Unsure

Please explain your answer.

24. Principle two: A fair admissions system should enable institutions to select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and their potential.
- □ Still valid
- □ Needs to be amended
- □ Unsure

Please explain your answer.

25. Principle three: A fair admissions system should strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid.
- □ Still valid
- □ Needs to be amended
- □ Unsure

Please explain your answer.

26. Principle four: A fair admissions should seek to minimise barriers for applicants.
- □ Still valid
- □ Needs to be amended
- □ Unsure

Please explain your answer.
27. Principle five: A fair admissions system should be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes.

☐ Still valid
☐ Needs to be amended
☐ Unsure

Please explain your answer.

28. Are there any other principles that should be considered?

END OF QUESTIONS