



Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

Good practice in Part-time Admissions

West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network, Leeds

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The TWILIGHT ZONE

What is SPA?

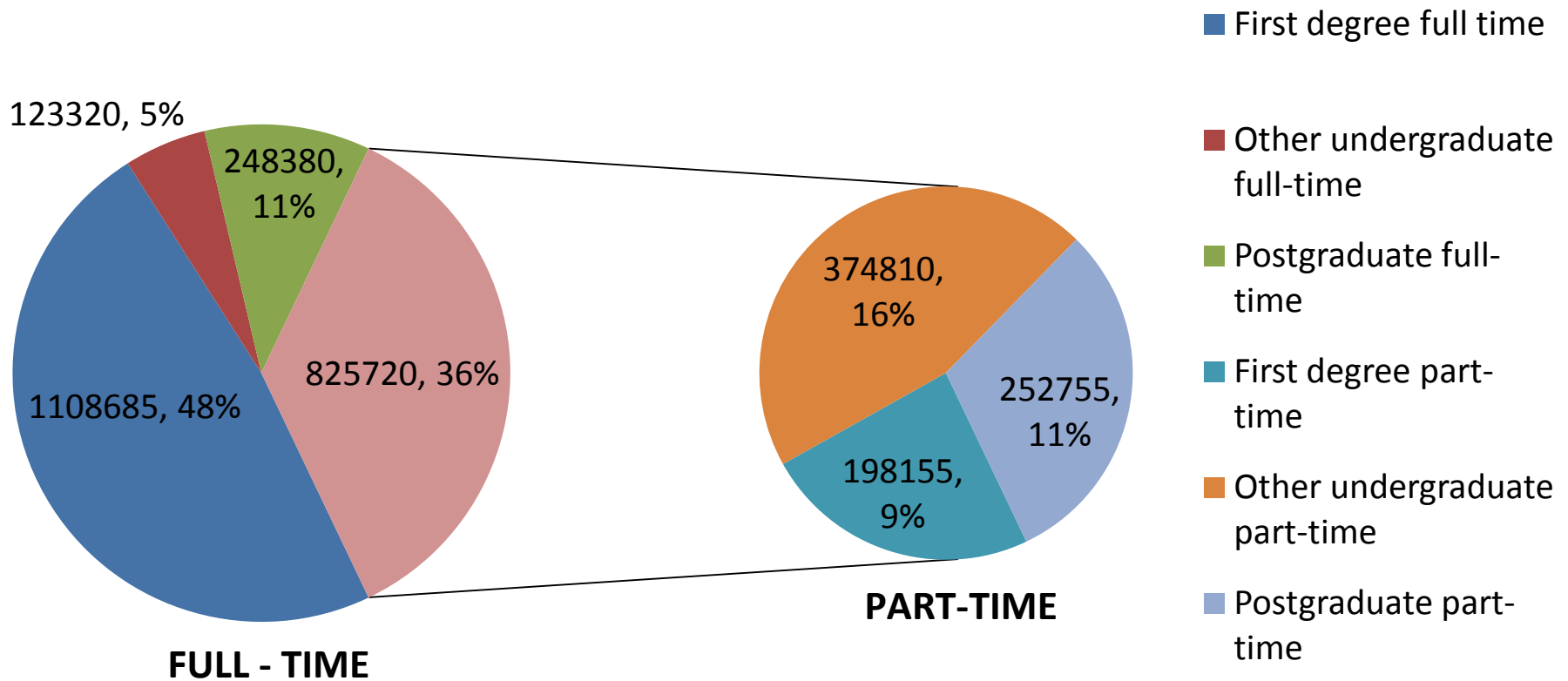
- Established in 2006 to promote good practice in admissions, recruitment and widening inclusion
- A central source of expertise and advice - a resource for institutions who wish to maintain and enhance excellence in these areas
- The UK's independent and objective voice on HE admissions – funded by the UK's four HE funding bodies and overseen by the SPA Steering Group
- Leads on the continuing development of fair admissions, evaluates and commissions research, and spreads best practice



SPA – some current objectives

- Review HE admissions practices and policies by collecting and reviewing good practice
Visits to over 125 HE Providers plus other stakeholders, forums, etc.
- Vocational qualifications –can applicants access clear and transparent entry requirement information?
- Contextual data – all academic and non-academic factors which should be considered as part of the admissions decision process
- Applicant Experience - viewing the total experience of the applicant from initial enquiry to registration and beyond
- Working with FE institutions, and HE and FE partners, to ensure that issues in the HE in FE experience are considered
- Part-time admissions

Comparison of recorded part-time and full-time student numbers



Taken from Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy . September 2009 - BIS (HESA 2009)



Why look at part-time?

“We’ve got to create a mix to take higher education forward...And because these flexible kinds of education and training are vital for those who miss out on higher education straight after school the push for two year degrees and wider part time or work-based study should be at the core of the wider participation agenda.”

*The Future of Higher Education 11/02/2010
– Peter Mandelson*

“We can see that the landscape of higher education is changing. Rising costs of higher education and the desire to improve our employability in a competitive job market are leading to increasing numbers of us choosing to study part time”

*National Student Forum, Annual Report,
2009*

Part-time study is viewed as helping to

- Widen inclusion
- Enhance fair access
- Offer students flexible study options
- Re-skill the workforce
- Meet the needs of employers
- Offer a cheaper alternative to traditional full-time study (?)

SPA Good Practice Statement on Part-time Admissions

- The SPA Good Practice Statement is intended to be a practical guide, with steps which Higher Education Providers can take.
- The primary constituency for SPA's Good Practice Statement is staff involved in admissions, recruitment and widening inclusion
 - with Part-time admissions this can be more difficult.....
- Draft issues document at <http://www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/part-time.html>

Part-time admissions - what SPA has done so far

- Consultation with Funding Councils, Governments
- UALL, SUALL, Action on Access, FACE, LLNs (England)
- Individual experts
- Visits to specialist institutions
- Draft statement released for comment to HE institutions, widening inclusion organisations, governments, funding councils, etc.
- Draft Good Practice Statement in early May

Developing the SPA Good Practice Statement

1. Introduction
 2. Definition of part-time students
 3. Strategic management and institutional commitment
 4. Admission of part-time students – principles
 5. Part-time application process, systems and organisation
 6. Data and Statistics on part-time applicants
 7. Information for prospective part-time students
 8. Advice and guidance to prospective part-time students
 9. Transition and support
 10. Part-time study and employers
 11. Further Education
 12. Recruitment of part-time students
 13. Actions by SPA
- Appendices



Defining part-time

| Organisation | Definition |
|------------------|---|
| One HEI | Programme consisting of 80 credits or less in an academic year |
| City Council | Programmes that involve less than 24 weeks of study per academic year or less than 21 hours of study per week |
| Student Railcard | Programmes that involve less than 20 weeks of study per academic year or less than 15 hours of study per week |
| UCAS Website | Part-time degree courses are normally taken over a longer period, usually five years or more. Precise times may vary according to individual institutions |

How useful are these definitions to either HE professionals or students?

How to define a 'part-time' student?

- HESA/Funding Councils' definition

The funding councils have agreed that a common definition of full-time is that years of study must involve a minimum of 24 weeks study

(this definition does not apply to final year students in institutions in Wales)

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/component/option,com_studrec/task,show_file/Itemid,233/mnl,09051/href,FTE.html

How to define a 'part-time' student?

Forms of study may include:

- 'Traditional' – full degree over longer period
- Distance learning
- Blended learning
- Short courses
- Access students
- Repeating students
- Recreational' students
- Employer-led

SPA's view?

Make the definition as wide as possible, while understanding the official definitions have implications for institutions and students.

Strategic Management and Institutional Commitment

Is it worth doing?

- What's in it for the higher education provider – academically and financially?
- Does the HE provider have the information necessary for deciding whether to engage in part-time study or not?
- How does it fit into the institution's mission?

Management

- Is it an integral part of the institution's normal management structure and practices?
- Is there a senior member of staff and/or committee or group responsible for it?

- QAA Code of Practice (Section 10)
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section10/default.asp>

- Schwartz principles:
 - transparency
 - selection for merit, potential and diversity
 - reliability, validity and relevance
 - minimising barriers
 - professionalism of staff<http://www.admissions-review.org.uk/downloads/finalreport.pdf>

- Admissions Policies should refer explicitly to part-time students

Entry requirements

- Should be set in accordance with usual academic processes
- Can be the same, lower, different – or higher - than full-time
- May be more ‘non-traditional’ applicants so even more important to ensure that credit transfer – in and out – and APL and APEL possibilities and procedures are clear?
- Should contextual data be considered?
- Be aware of the needs of professional courses

Are applicants clear about the very considerable commitment they are taking on?

Part-time application process; organisation and procedures

Organisation

- Who should deal with it in an institution, at institution/department/faculty level?
- Are PT data and information systems integrated into the institution's main systems?

Process

- *How* should applicants apply? Paper? Online?
- What does the application process for different types of pt applicants need to involve?

National System?

- The HEFCE/LLN/UCAS pilot. Could a national system deal with the complexity?

Interviews and auditions

- Must meet part-time students varying needs

Data and statistics

Is information on part-time students

- Brought to the attention of senior management?

Data and statistics have to be used, not just gathered

- Integrated into the institution's main systems?

- Collected as *necessary*?

- Is there a danger that PT applicants may be put off by excessively complex application procedures?

- Appropriate?

- Perhaps there are specific factors to be considered regarding part-time students?

Information, advice & guidance for PT applicants

- Is information easy to find on every website – and is it specific about mode (FT/PT) and level (UG/PG)?
- Does it include information on:
 1. Course and level
 2. Contact point
 3. Admissions and entry requirements
 4. Timetabling (in what detail?)
 5. Learner support arrangements
 6. Clear information about the commitment
 7. Relations with employers
 8. Financial support information
 9. Arrangements for tuition fees
- What view do we have of national sources of information?
- Do advisers routinely think of recommending part-time study to potential students?

And still to come.....

- Transition & support
 - Are there appropriate support arrangements, including courses in time management and study skills?
 - Are they available at appropriate times?
- Employers and part-time study
 - Bearing in mind the QAA's study how can speed of response to meet employers' needs be matched to the responsibilities of the institution?
 - What is the significance – if any – of HEFCE co-funded courses?

And still to come.....

- Further education
 - How do FE institutions admit part-time students?
 - What are the issues in the relationship between FE and HE partners where part-time students are concerned?
- Recruitment
 - Is there appropriate knowledge of part-time study options in all parts of the institution (from switchboard to Director of Marketing)?

Next steps?

- Who do we talk to – and how do we reach them?
 - Who else would *like* to know about, and comment on, this Statement?
 - How do we reach key individuals when there is no ‘coherent’, easily accessed, PT admissions community?
- Who else *should* think about it?
 - How do we get all higher education providers to engage with PT issues?
- What else would you like to see in it – or have taken out?
- *We need practical examples of good practice how do we get them?*
- Your suggestions?

Some part-time 'principles' and thoughts

In information, is there "parity of transparency"

Rigorous
(but not rigid)

'There isn't the equivalent of Connexions or the schools careers advisor to help us navigate our journey'

Are part-time students the real student consumers?

Not "keys, caretakers and cold coffee"

Flexible
(but not floppy)



**Questions, comments – *and examples of good practice* -
to:**

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