



## SPA post-application recommendations

---

SPA recommends higher education providers consider undertaking or reviewing the following practice to support a good applicant experience:

### 1. Prepare, review, publish and implement policies well in advance of any consideration of applications

- Much of what happens to an application during the post-application stage involves criteria, policies and offer-making strategies developed by an institution well before the application is made.
- Admissions staff should always be mindful of the applicant's perspective and timeline: what an institution prepares and works on pre-application may not impact upon the applicant until post-application.
- Preparation is vital to a successful admissions operation and SPA's Good Practice Statements are an existing resource to support the post-application stage.  
[www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/index.html](http://www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/index.html)
- HEIs should consider how practice complies with the precepts within the QAA Code of Practice for Admissions to higher education.  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section10/RecruitmentandAdmissions.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section10/RecruitmentandAdmissions.pdf)
- Risks to transparency and consistency in admissions may be mitigated by:
  - integration of institution practices and practitioners across all the stages;
  - awareness of the perceived difference in timelines for applicants, advisors and admissions staff;
  - consideration of the impact of any change post-application.

## **2. To improve conversion and retention rates, understand the type and extent of engagement experienced by an institution's own applicants, students and alumni**

- Recognising and comprehending engagement should aid in redirecting admissions resources where they are most effective.
  - Engagement will most commonly be initiated as an aid to conversion, but there may be a number of other purposes to consider, including diagnostic, logistic, record management and student support.
  - Identify engagement from areas of the institution other than admissions to mitigate a risk of duplication, conflicting messages and other inefficient use of resources.
  - Co-ordinate engagement across all concerned parties within an institution.
  - Plot potential points of interaction against the whole admissions process to help identify the most appropriate times for engagement to suit different purposes.
- Consider the purpose of the engagement, the resources available and the timescales/deadlines involved to determine what type of engagement would be most effective.
  - Judge considerations on grounds of: appropriateness; efficiency; supportiveness.
- Plan the process for monitoring/measuring effectiveness and consider timely mechanisms for changing ineffective engagement.
- The type of engagement chosen should be one that best fits the needs or intended purpose behind such needs, as determined by the strategic and operational aims.
  - An intermediary may be more appropriate in meeting institution aims if better resourced and more experienced in engaging with different stakeholders.
  - However, any such engagement should be viewed as a supplement to, not necessarily a replacement for, direct engagement.
- Always consider how to offer constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
- Non-engagement should be investigated thoroughly as it may indicate a problem that needs to be resolved.
  - In the few situations where inaction is deemed justified, it may indicate a need to change policies to accommodate such practice, or a need to improve application information to make terms and requirements clearer to applicants.

Dan Shaffer

SPA

June 2011