



# **Contextualised Admissions Policies and Fair Access**

## **The Case of a Competitive and Research-intensive Institution**

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# 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 success 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)

# Today's talk

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)

## Origin? **Schwartz report (2004)**

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**

Among the external factors	Among the institutional factors
Economic & Social	Size
Political & Policy-related	Location
UCAS paperless	Type

Evidence – based? **YES**

# The importance of the context!

<b>Among the external factors</b>	<b>Among the institutional factors University of St Andrews</b>
<b>Increase of applications</b>	<b>‘Small’</b>
<b>Number of funded places</b>	<b>Degree portfolio and highly competitive courses</b>
<b>Fees</b>	<b>Excellence in T&amp;L</b>
<b>Scotland, RUK, Europe</b>	<b>Research-intensive</b>
<b>UCAS paperless</b>	<b>Scotland</b>
<b>Media and other stakeholders’ pressure</b>	<b>Decentralised admission decision</b>
<b>HESA WP benchmarks SIMD20</b>	<b>benchmarks not met SIMD20 low</b>
<b>REACH (SFC and five Scottish HEIs)</b>	

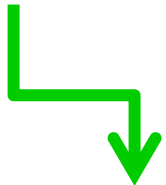
# Evidence-Based

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'

# From Entry 2008 to Entry 2013

Entry requirements

Applications, offers and places

Fees and bursaries

Scottish Government and outcome agreements

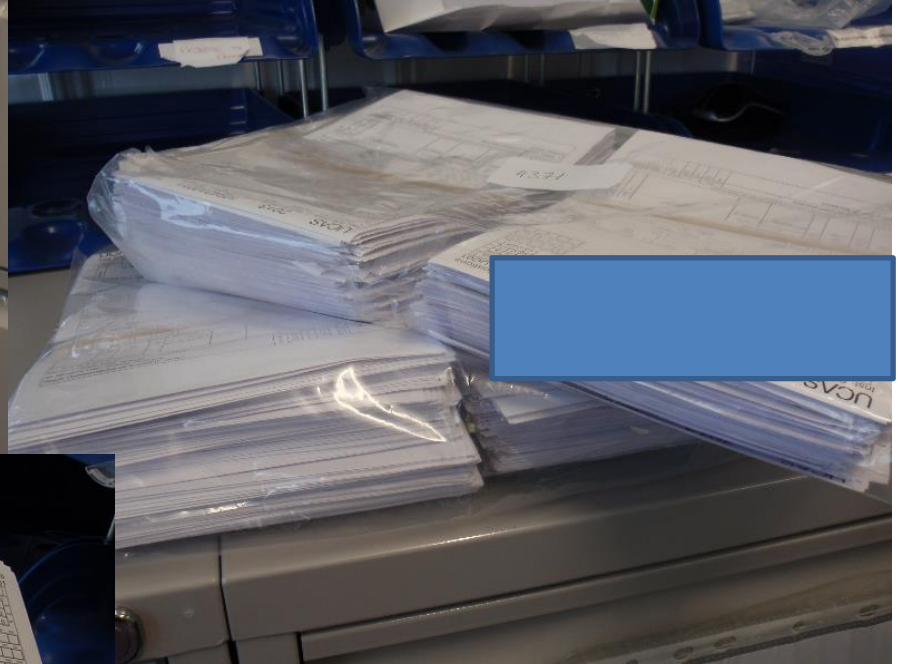
Institution – Cultural change

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





## Personal Info

In care, parent's edu, previous outreach activity

## Previous education

## Known qualifications

## Forthcoming qualifications

Disability  
Employment

School information and  
predicted qualifications

## Personal statement

## Reference

Criminal conviction

# Entry 2008

The image shows a 2008 University of Edinburgh application form. Several sections are highlighted with blue boxes and labeled with yellow text:

- Personal Info**: Located at the top left of the form.
- In care, parent's edu, previous outreach activity**: Located below the Personal Info section.
- Secondary education**: Located below the outreach activity section.
- A??**: A small box containing the text "A??".
- Known qualifications**: Located on the right side of the form, above the "Forthcoming qualifications" section.
- Forthcoming qualifications**: Located on the right side of the form, below the "Known qualifications" section.
- School information and predicted qualifications**: Located on the right side of the form, below the "Forthcoming qualifications" section.
- Personal statement**: Located at the bottom left of the form.
- Reference**: Located at the bottom right of the form.

- 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



University of St Andrews

This student should be given careful consideration due to the following programs they have undertaken or due to the fact they have achieved their academic qualifications in an Access Priority School. Before rejecting this student please contact a member of the School Liaison and Access Team within Student Recruitment and Admissions. Tel: 2346 Email: [schools.access@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:schools.access@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Student Profile of: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B: \_\_\_\_\_

This pupil resides in an area that is in the bottom 2 quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ☐ Q1 Q2

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Sutton Trust Summer School Student with the following criteria ☐

- Attends a low progression school with access issues attached
- First in the family to attend university
- Parents in non-professional occupations
- In receipt of Educational Maintenance Allowance

% of pupils achieving 5 Highers A-C in S3 \_\_\_\_\_

% of Pupils progressing to HE \_\_\_\_\_

National average for 5 Highers A-C in S3 = 11% and progression to HE average = 15%.

Local School Project Initiative ☐

(The student is from a local school and has been selected on the basis of the school's low progression and/or their personal access criteria. They have been successful in completing a project of study and has attended the University of St Andrews over the past three years in order to prepare themselves for university life)

Pre-HE engagement  
WP programmes

School info  
from Scottish  
schools on line

# Entry 2013

Admissions | University of St Andrews

Islands

Total

[No canvas support]

## Status Key

☐ Pending ☒ Unconditional ☒ Conditional ☒ Reject  
☐ Include processed applications ☐ Include withdrawn applications

Select: All / Decided / None



XLSX  
Search:

	UCAS ID	Widening Participation				Cat.	Name	Pile	Domicile	Decision		Dec.	Crs.	Applied	Ay
		P.	D.	R.	Status					This School	Status				
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L102	05/10/12	20
Open	109				HELD	USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L102	20/11/12	20
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L100	03/10/12	20
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L100	11/10/12	20
Open	108					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L100	02/10/12	20
Open	109				HELD	USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L100	22/11/12	20
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L100	17/11/12	20
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/>	1P	L100	03/10/12	20
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1P	LL12	11/10/12	20
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1P	LV15	05/10/12	20
Open	109					USHF			Scotland	Pending	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1P	LV15	12/10/12	20

Error on page.

Local intranet | Protected Mode: Off

100%



EN 13:19  
25/11/2012

Islands

Total

[No canvas support]

## Status Key

☒ Pending ☒ Unconditional ☒ Conditional ☒ Reject  
☐ Include processed applications ☐ Include withdrawn applications

Select: All / Decided / None

XLSX  
Search:

UCAS ID	Widening Participation				Mat.	Name	Pile	Domicile	Decision		Dec.	Crs.	Applied	A
	P.	D.	R.	Status					This School	Status				
<a href="#">Close</a>					USHF			Scotland	Pending			LV15	05/10/12	20

## Form Results

Intermediate 1 & 2 Courses Maths: Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100: A (8 2011)  
Intermediate 1 & 2 Courses Maths: Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100: A (8 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 Highers Chemistry C012: A (8 2012)  
SQA Highers English C270: A (8 2012)  
SQA Highers History C259: A (8 2012)  
SQA Highers Maths: Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100: A (8 2012)  
SQA Highers Physics (Revised) C272: A (8 2012)  
Standard Grade Chemistry: 1 (8 2011)  
Standard Grade English: 1 (8 2010)  
Standard Grade French: 2 (8 2011)  
Standard Grade History: 1 (8 2011)  
Standard Grade Music: 1 (8 2011)  
Standard Grade Physics: 1 (8 2011)  
Standard Grade Spanish: 3 (8 2011)

## Predicted Results

- AH: Maths: Maths 1, 2 & 3 C100 = B
- AH: History C259 = B
- AH: English C270 = B

## Awarded Results

## Basic Info

Name:  
Gender:  
Date O:  
Nationa:  
Country:  
Postco:  
Course:  
Philoso:

## School Info

Perth Academy  
  
MURRAY PLACE  
PERTHSHIRE  
Scotland

2007 - 2013

Below average school

Widening Participation  
A4: LOW PROG  
SCH

Other St And  
Applications

# Summary

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**

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