



Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

**Fair admissions working for fair access and
a good applicant experience**

Janet Graham, Director of SPA

AimHigher West Midlands Annual Conference, 4 July 2017

What is SPA?

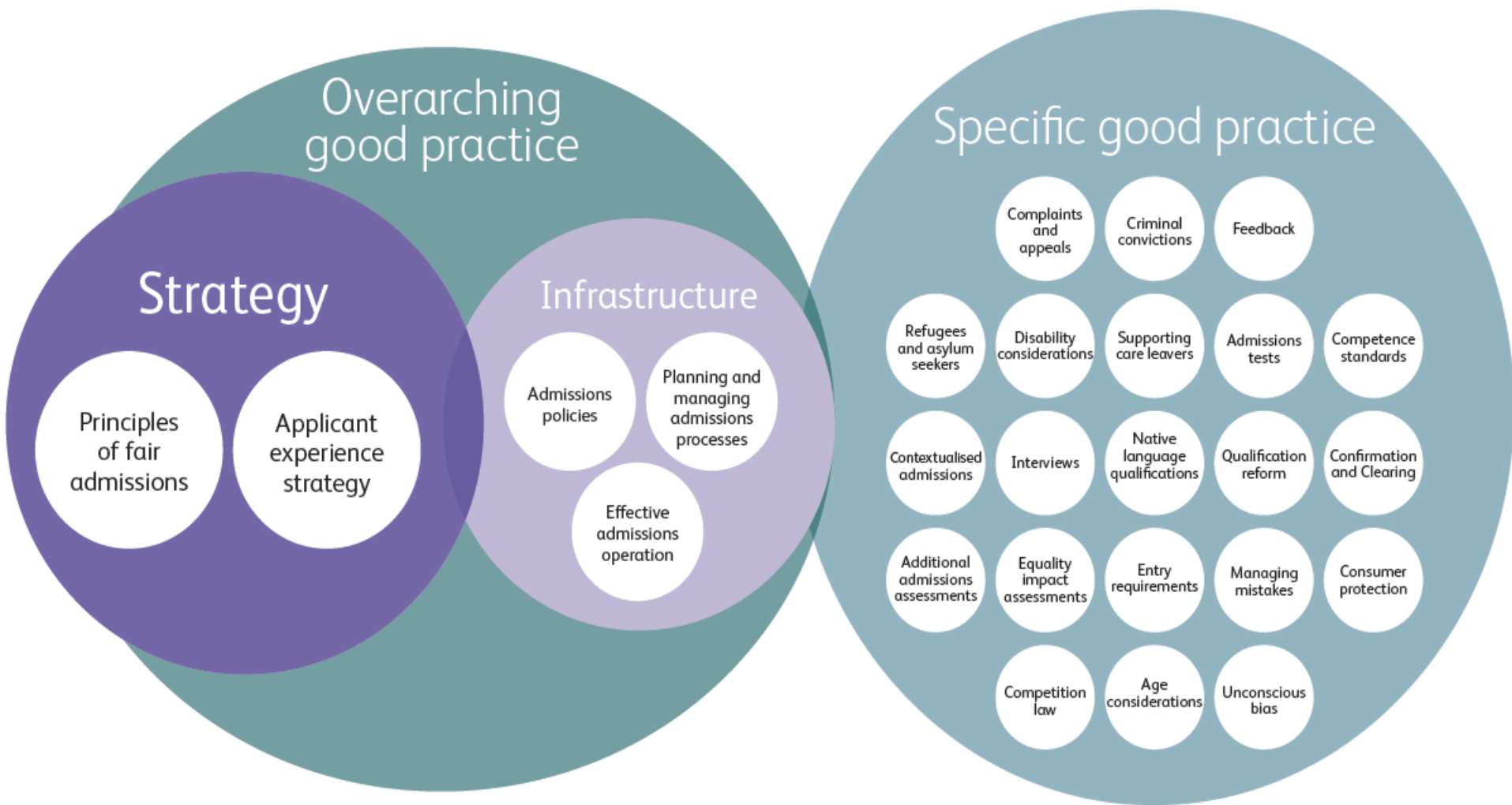
Set up in 2006 by Universities UK, the HE funding councils and UCAS, following the Schwartz Report *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice*, 2004:

“The Group recommends the creation of a central source of expertise and advice on admissions issues. Its purpose would be to act as a resource for institutions who wish to maintain and enhance excellence in admissions. Such a centre could lead the continuing development of fair admissions, evaluating and commissioning research, and spreading best practice.”

Who are we?

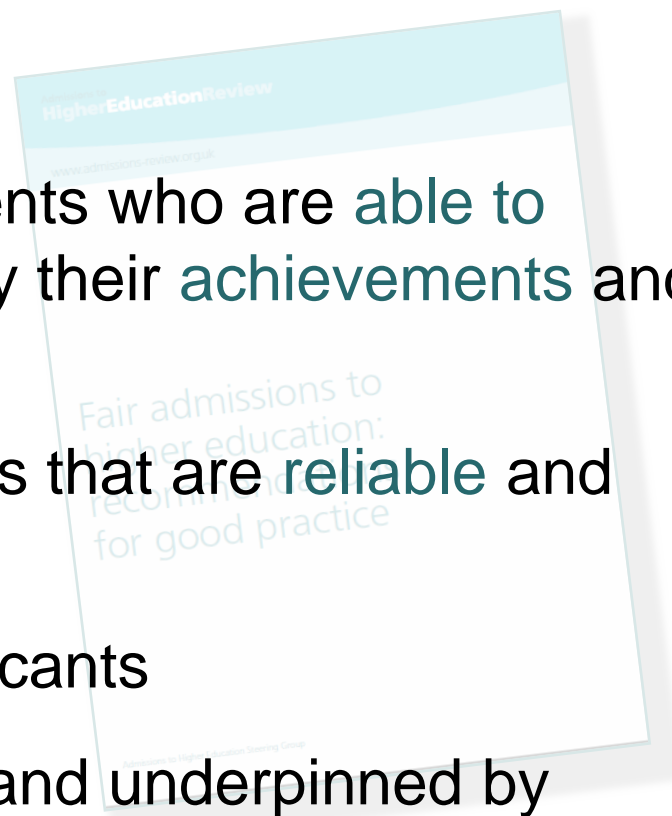


SPA's good practice



Fair, in principle

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



Fair, in principle

QAA B2 Expectation:

“Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.”

How does this fit in the competitive environment?

- Changes in HE landscape – Office for Students, TEF etc
- Applicants as consumers – know your students' rights, see CMA and HE provider websites
- Competition between HE providers - more offers made, including unconditional
- Contextual factors more likely to be considered than ever before - make sure HEPs know about your students - new information to be collected in UCAS Apply for 2019 entry
- Greater need for HEPs to be transparent and professional through out the application experience and transition to support the student

Fair, in practice

A joined-up approach to fair access and fair admissions as part of the student experience influences students'

preparation

engagement

attitudes

Which affects not only the quality of their student experience, but whether or not they seek to be your students at all

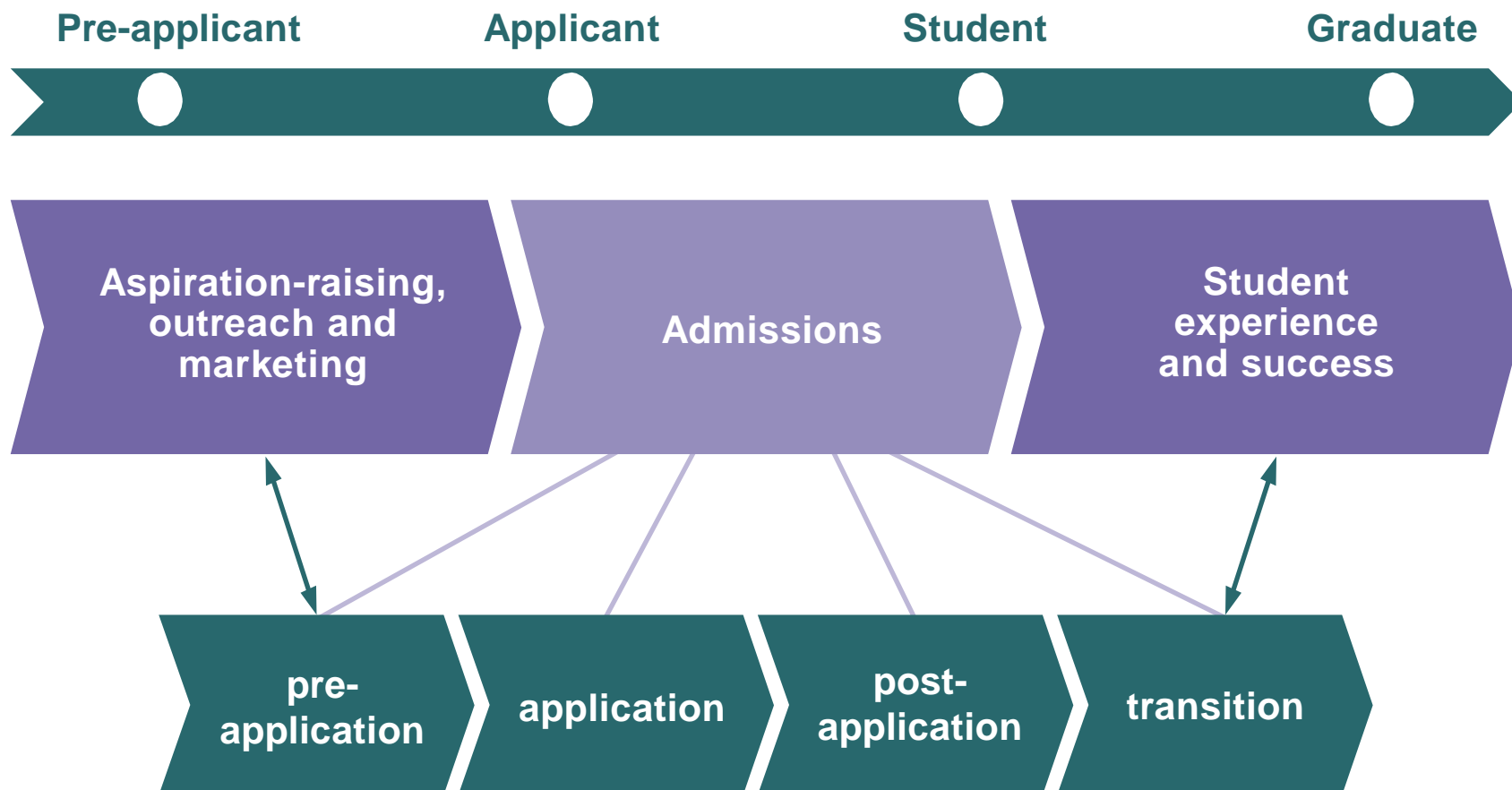
and shapes the 'psychological contract' early on for motivating retention and success

Fair, in practice

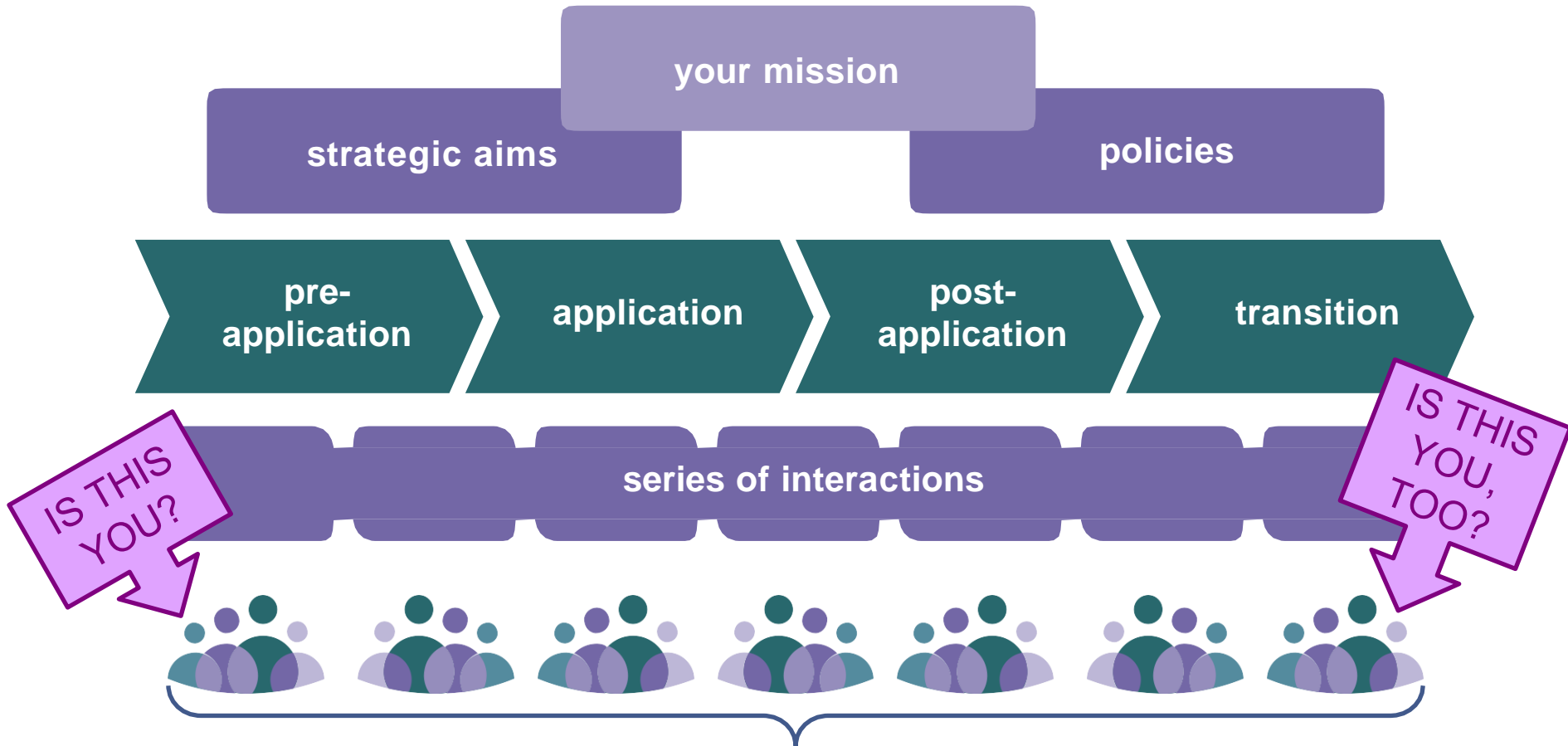


To what extent does HE provider WP, recruitment and admissions shape those accepted for entry, rather than merely hope they'll fit?

Fair, in practice



Fair, working together



How do these interactive groups come together and work together?
How do they contribute to a good applicant experience?

What difference does it make?

A good applicant experience

- ✓ is mutually beneficial to both the applicant and the higher education provider
- ✓ prepares, informs and provides equality of opportunity to enter higher education
- ✓ should accurately match the student's aims, abilities and aspirations with the character of the institution
- ✓ therefore improves student retention and enhances the strategic mission of the institution

A poor applicant experience

- ✗ is inherently detrimental to both the applicant and the higher education provider – *both lose out*
- ✗ perpetuates barriers to entry
- ✗ disengages potential applicants and their advisors
- ✗ risks incongruence between student expectations and institutional character
- ✗ therefore embeds an enrolment strategy leading to unfulfilled potential and increased drop-out

HOW SHOULD ORIENTATIONS BE INSTALLED?

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Contextualised admissions

Contextual Information and Data

- Pre-Application information from outreach/WP
- Historic institution data trends and analysis
- External data matched to the applicant
- Background information from the application

Original Application Data

Qualifications

Personal statement

Reference

Test results taken pre-application

Other

Holistic Assessment

Initial Assessment

Offer Making

Final Decision

Student Support

What information is used?

Most common factors used in contextualised admissions:

care leaver

1

outreach/
WP activity

3

disability

4

Polar
(participation by area)

5

mature

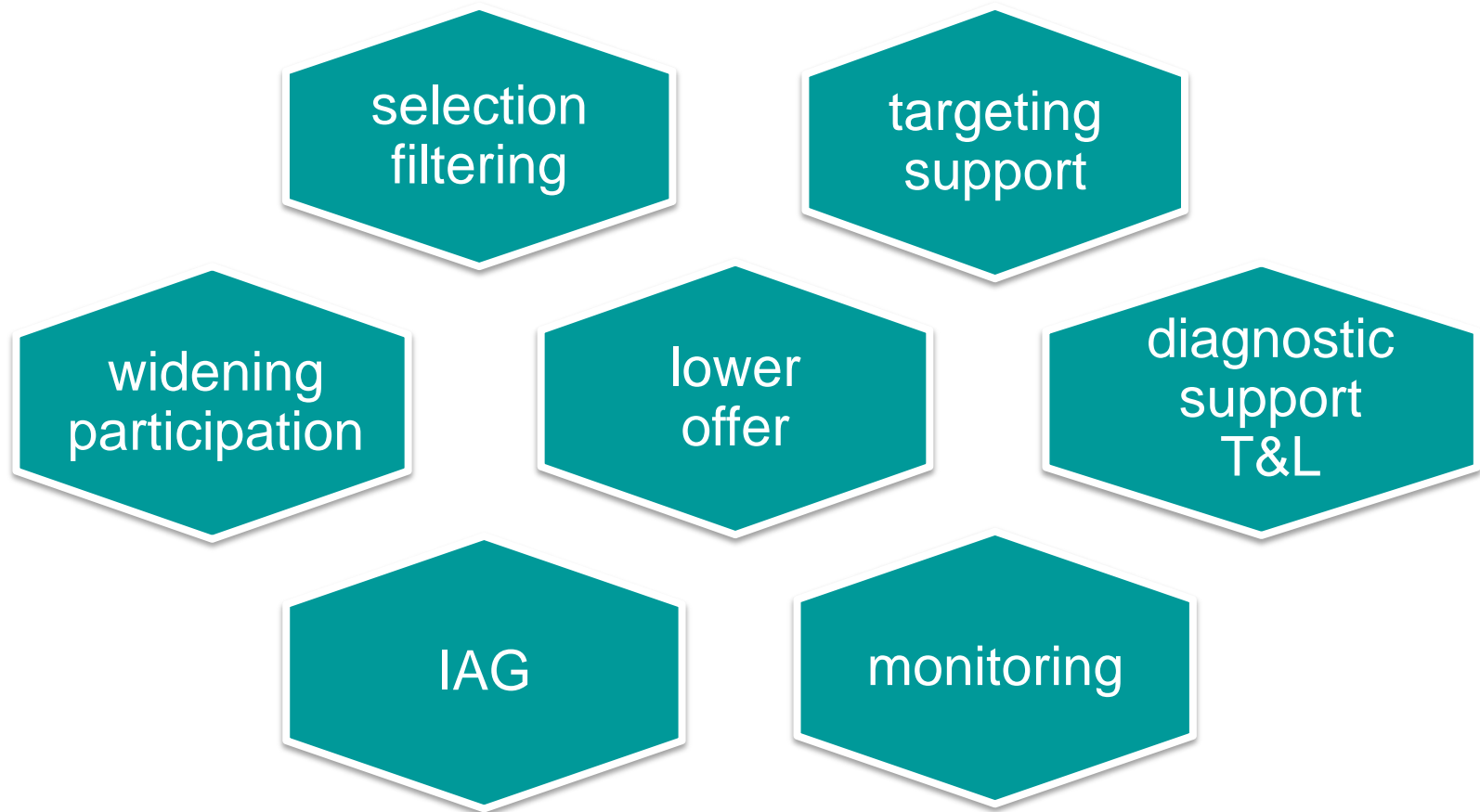
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school
performance

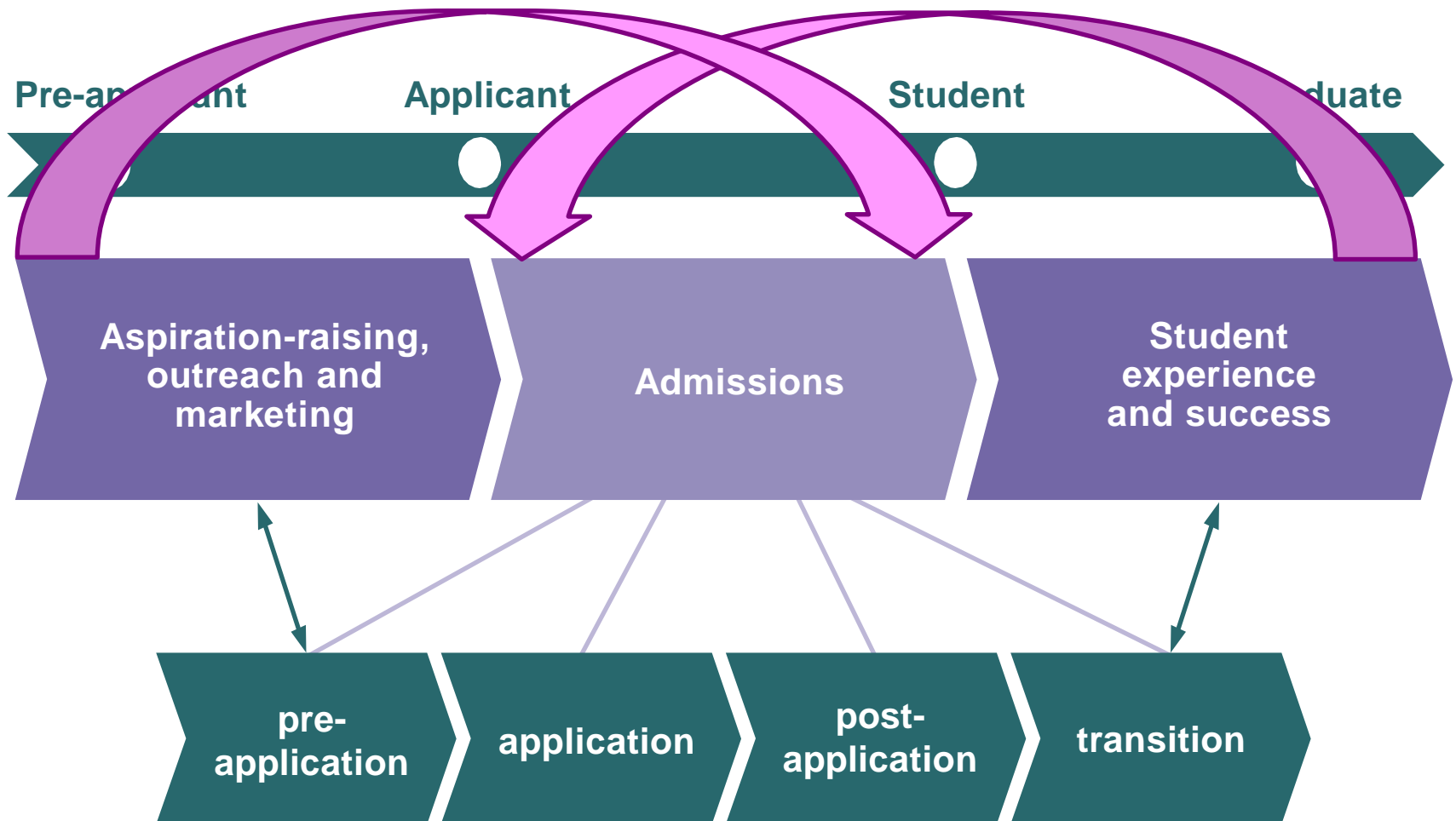
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Source: SPA Survey 2015, www.spa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Research-CA-survey-report-2015_1.pdf

How is it used?



Making good use of context



Fair, in practice



Most common reasons for early drop-out

**How can WP,
Admissions and
Student Records
staff be active
agents in fixing
these reasons
before anyone
starts?**

Personal reasons

Lack of integration

Dissatisfaction with course/institution

Lack of preparedness

Wrong choice of course

Financial reasons

To take up a more attractive opportunity



Thank you

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