



Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

Working Smarter for a Better Applicant Experience

SROC Conference – 12 April 2011

Dan Shaffer, Senior Project Officer

What is SPA?

- Set up in 2006 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**.”*

- UK's independent and objective voice on HE admissions
- Small team, but with practical and relevant experience

What is SPA?



What is SPA?

Published good practice on:

- Admissions policies
- Admissions tests
- Criminal convictions
- Feedback to applicants
- Interviews
- Offer-making
- Planning and managing admissions

Current research:

- Applicant experience strategy
- Contextual data
- Paperless processes
- Postgraduate admissions
- Vocational qualifications

All available on our website: www.spa.ac.uk

What is the applicant experience?

- The 1994 Group's report in 2007, titled *Enhancing the Student Experience*, noted that:

*“A student's experience of university does not begin at the moment they step onto campus at the beginning of October, and it does not end when they are shaking the hand of the Vice-Chancellor at graduation. The **early relationship between student and university** is important during the applications and admissions process, in **preparing students for university life**, and to **initiate their engagement with and attitudes towards their university** in the best way possible. A student's experience of university can stretch back even further through effective HE engagement with schools and colleges.”*

What is the applicant experience?

- Built under four broad stages



- Adopted a behavioural view of ‘experience’
*Interactive participation and engagement,
not a passive journey*
- Effective IAG must link and underpin engagement through all pre-entry stages and beyond

What is effective IAG?



What is effective IAG?

“The only thing to do with good advice is pass it on. It is never any use to oneself.”

Oscar Wilde

Who delivers the applicant experience?

We all play a vital part and everyone's involved



Who delivers the applicant experience?



Retention and graduation

Pre-application

enquirers
potential applicants

Application

study choices

Post-application

selection; offers
accepted applicants
unsuccessful applicants

Transition

confirmation
induction
enrolment

Who delivers the applicant experience?

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

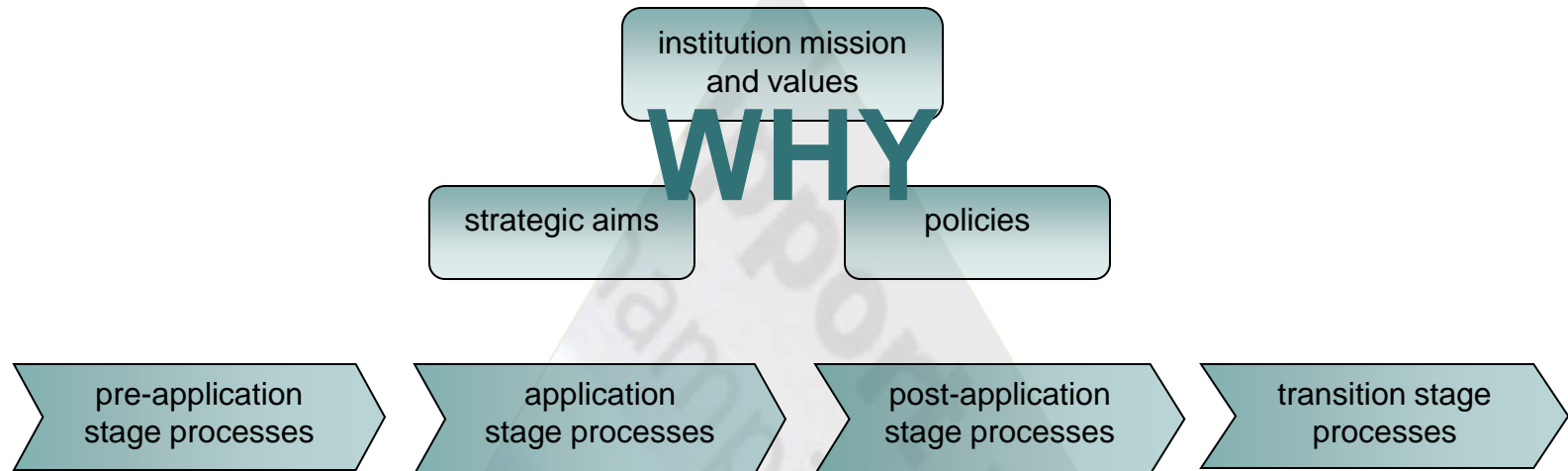
Working smarter: collaborative strategy



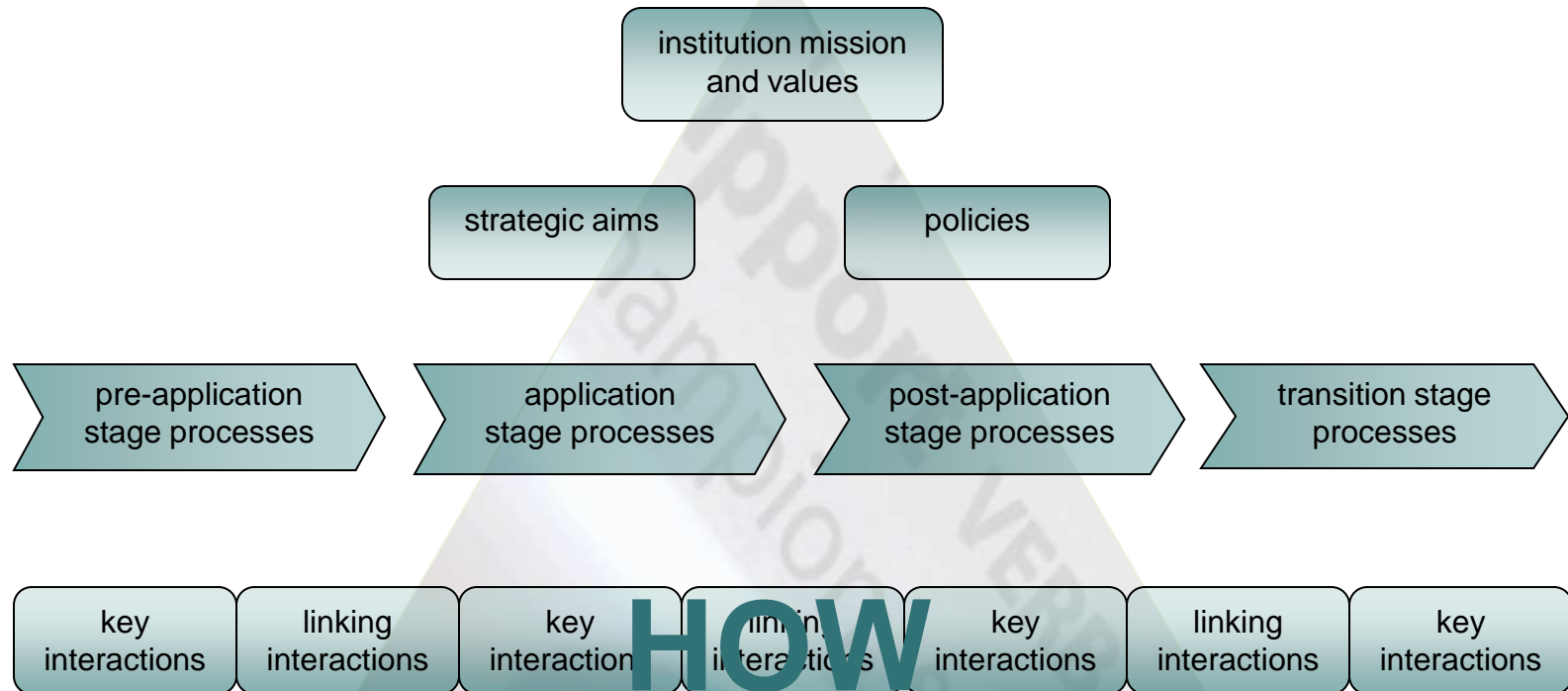
Working smarter: collaborative strategy



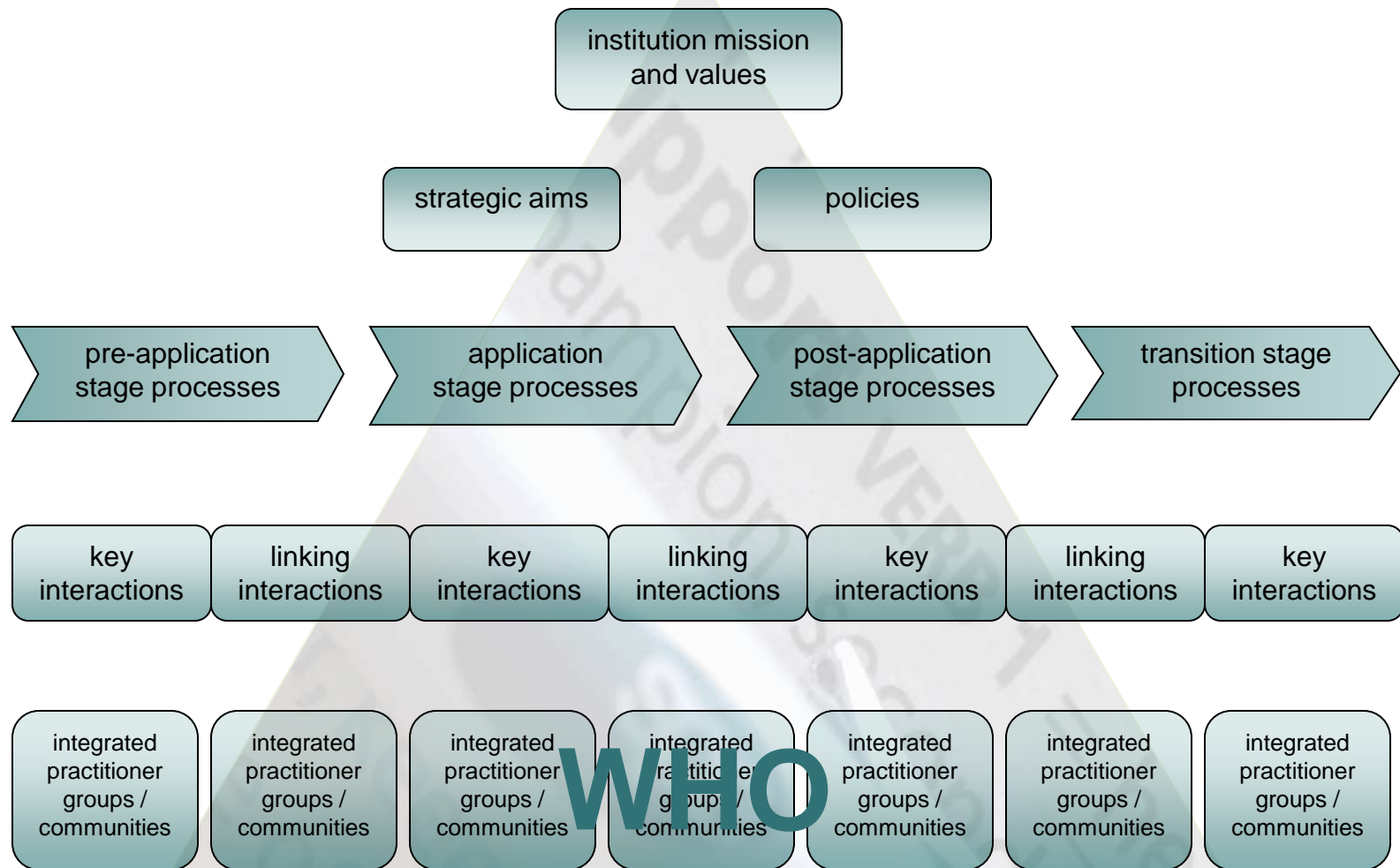
Working smarter: collaborative strategy



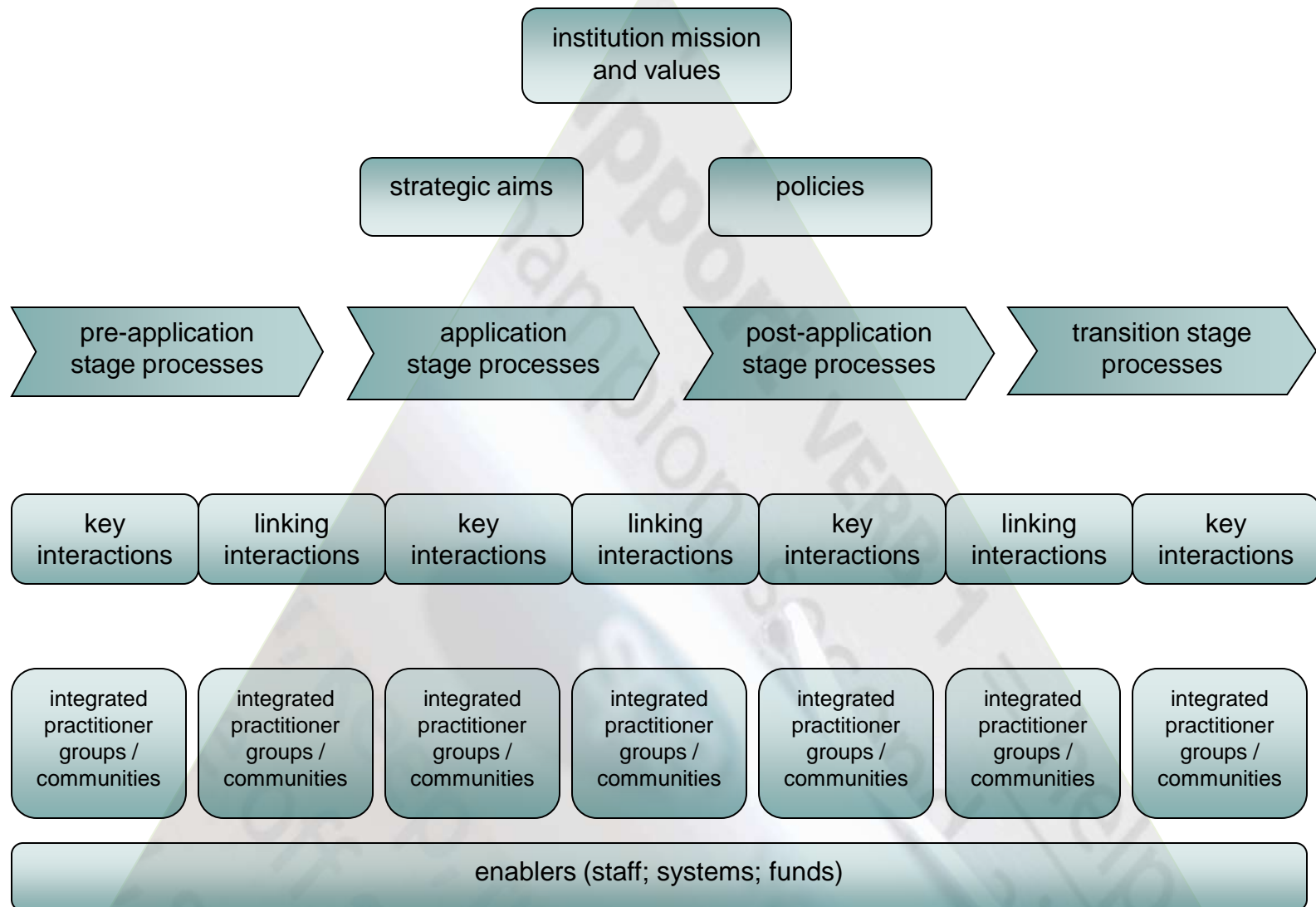
Working smarter: collaborative strategy



Working smarter: collaborative strategy



Working smarter: collaborative strategy



monitor



Want more about the applicant experience?

- More detail on the SPA website:

www.spa.ac.uk/applicant-experience

- Become a case study institution working with SPA
talk to Dan Shaffer, Senior Project Officer, *d.shaffer@spa.ac.uk*
- Join the AUA/SPA Special Interest Group:
www.aua.ac.uk/networks/sigs/current/applicant_experience



Thank you

Your feedback is welcomed

**More information from: enquiries@spa.ac.uk or 01242 544891
www.spa.ac.uk**

Pre-application recommendations

- 1. Engage with learners well in advance of any potential application to initiate and support the applicant experience**
- 2. Utilise experience gained through such engagement to continually inform and improve the applicant experience**

Application recommendations

- 1. Strive to ensure that learner engagement with the application process maximises the institution's ability to identify the most suitable**
- 2. Review the quality of applications to measure successful engagement**

Post-application recommendations (draft)

- 1. Prepare, review, publish and implement good practice policy well in advance of any consideration of applications**
- 2. Understand the type and extent of engagement experienced by an institution's own applicants, students and alumni to improve conversion and retention rates**

(additional reading) **SPA recommendations: evaluation**

Transition recommendations

...in development, expected towards end of 2011