

The applicant experience: Introduction

The applicant experience encompasses all the opportunities or points of interaction between higher education (HE) and a potential student. Such experience affects whether or not an individual becomes a higher education student, and indeed whether or not an individual chooses to apply to HE in the first place. Managing these interactions requires integrated practice across the whole applicant experience, leading to a more predictable transition into HE. As a precursor to the student experience, a successful applicant experience will ultimately improve retention and overall student experience.

The SPA guide to the applicant experience incorporates all published information and additional resources from our two year research project into the applicant experience. The guide can be downloaded in full or you can pick individual elements to look at in more detail. HE providers are welcome to use these materials within their own strategic planning, admissions reviews and training.

The applicant experience is divided into four stages:

- **Pre-application** covers individual consideration of higher education study and all activities prior to any commitment to commence an application for the given admissions entry cycle.
- **Application** refers to all activities from the point a learner has committed to start an application for the given admissions entry cycle up to the point that application is considered by the institution(s) applied to.
- **Post-application** looks at all activities concerning a HE provider's consideration of a submitted application, from the point of initial institutional assessment through to when the applicant has been confirmed or guaranteed a place.
- **Transition** examines all post-confirmation activities, from the point of confirmation of an applicant's place to the commencement of study and continuation through the student experience.

