Click and Go?: transparency and consistency in HEI website information for applicants

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Introduction

- Schwartz Review and overall methodology
- Content analysis of web-based course pages
- Content analysis methodology
- Findings
- Discussion- transparency and consistency rhetoric and reality?

Schwartz Report 2004 and Schwartz Review 2008

- Schwartz and the five principles
- Transparency, consistency and minimising barriers
- Mixed methods approach
- Literature review
- Survey of senior policymakers in all HEIs
- Ten case studies
- Content analysis

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Content analysis methodology

- Sample- all 139 HEIs and 62 large non-HEIs

- Aim 1 - to locate course info and measure how easily found

- Aim 2 - to analyse content of admissions policy statements

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Usefulness and user-friendliness

- Unit of analysis: sample of course web pages

- Twin categorisation: identify location and analyse components

- Levels of data: frequency; usability; relationship between message components

Paradox of web-based information sampling

- it is quicker and thus cheaper to access data -theoretically possible to analyse data relating to entire populations of interest

- Yet the proliferation and ephemeral nature of web-based data sources can threaten reliability and validity

- We used an entire fixed population of official institutional websites

Course selection

- Chosen from largest and smallest recruiting subject area at each HEI
- Chosen from largest recruiting subject area for sampled non-HEIs
- Fields: entry requirements; UCAS tariff points; equivalent qualifications; applicant profiles; interview/test/audition required; previous experience; equal opportunities

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Admissions policy statements

- how easily found (from home page; course page)
- Six key content areas:
  - admissions process
  - feedback
  - criminal checks
  - complaints procedures
  - appeals
  - equality/disabilities

Findings - Qualifications

Table 1 Number of clicks to course page from home page

No. of clicks	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+	Total
No of courses	3	25	131	108	57	7	12	340
Percentage	1	7	38	31	16	2	3	98

Table 2 UCAS Tariff points by institution type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
found	175	62	25	40	200	57
not found	103	40	35	60	140	42
Grand Total	278	102	62	100	340	99

Table 3 Equivalent qualifications by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
found	248	88	44	71	292	85
not found	30	11	18	29	48	15
Grand Total	278	99	62	100	340	100

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Findings - Equality

Table 4 Equality reference for disabled students by type

	HEI	%	Non-HEI	%	Total	Overall %
found	73	*26*	22	*35*	95	*28*
not found	205	*74*	40	*64*	245	*72*
Grand Total	278	*100*	62	*99*	340	*100*

Findings - Admissions Policy 1

Table 5 Admissions Policy by type of institution

	HEI	%	Non- HEI	%	Total	Overall %
found	85	61	12	19	97	48
not found	54	39	50	81	104	52
Grand Total	139	100	62	100	201	100

Table 6 Admissions Policy by size of institution

	size 1	size 2	size 3	size 4	Total	Overall %
found	20	39	23	15	97	48
not found	16	19	30	37	104	52
Total	36	58	53	52	201	100

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Findings - Admissions Policy 2

Table 7 Admissions Policy clicks by type

HEIs			Non-HEIs		
Clicks	No. inst via home page	No. of inst via course page	Clicks	No. inst via home page	No. of inst via course page
1	2	6	1	1	2
2	36	17	2	1	3
3	5	8	3	1	2
4	2		4		
5	2	3	5	1	
6	1		6	1	
7	1		7		
8	1		8		
9	1		9		
Total	51	34	Total	5	7

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Findings - Admissions Policy 3

Table 8 Admissions policy contents

Contents	Yes	%
Application Process	58	60
Feedback	49	51
Criminal Convictions	42	43
Complaints	46	47
Appeals	35	36
Disability and Equality	76	78

Table 9 Number of content areas mentioned in policy statements

No. of content areas mentioned in each policy	Count	%
0	5	5
1	15	15
2	17	18
3	18	19
4	19	20
5	11	11
6	12	12
Total	**97**	**100**

Findings - Admissions Policy 4

Table 10 Content areas by institution type

	HEI	%	non-HEI	%	Total	%
Have Admissions Policy statement	**85**	*62*	12	*19*	97	*48*
Content areas						
Application Process	49	*58*	9	*75*	58	*60*
Feedback	45	*53*	4	*33*	49	*51*
Criminal Convictions	38	*45*	4	*33*	42	*43*
Complaints	44	*52*	2	*17*	46	*47*
Appeals	33	*39*	2	*17*	35	*36*
Disability and Equality	67	*79*	9	*75*	76	*78*

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Conclusion

- Lack of transparency and consistency potentially leading to a deficit in widening participation.

- Review found variation in how and where applicants were informed about quals accepted

- Institutions use course information pages as filter mechanism thus creating additional barriers to participation

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