

# Higher Education Policy and Admissions Advice

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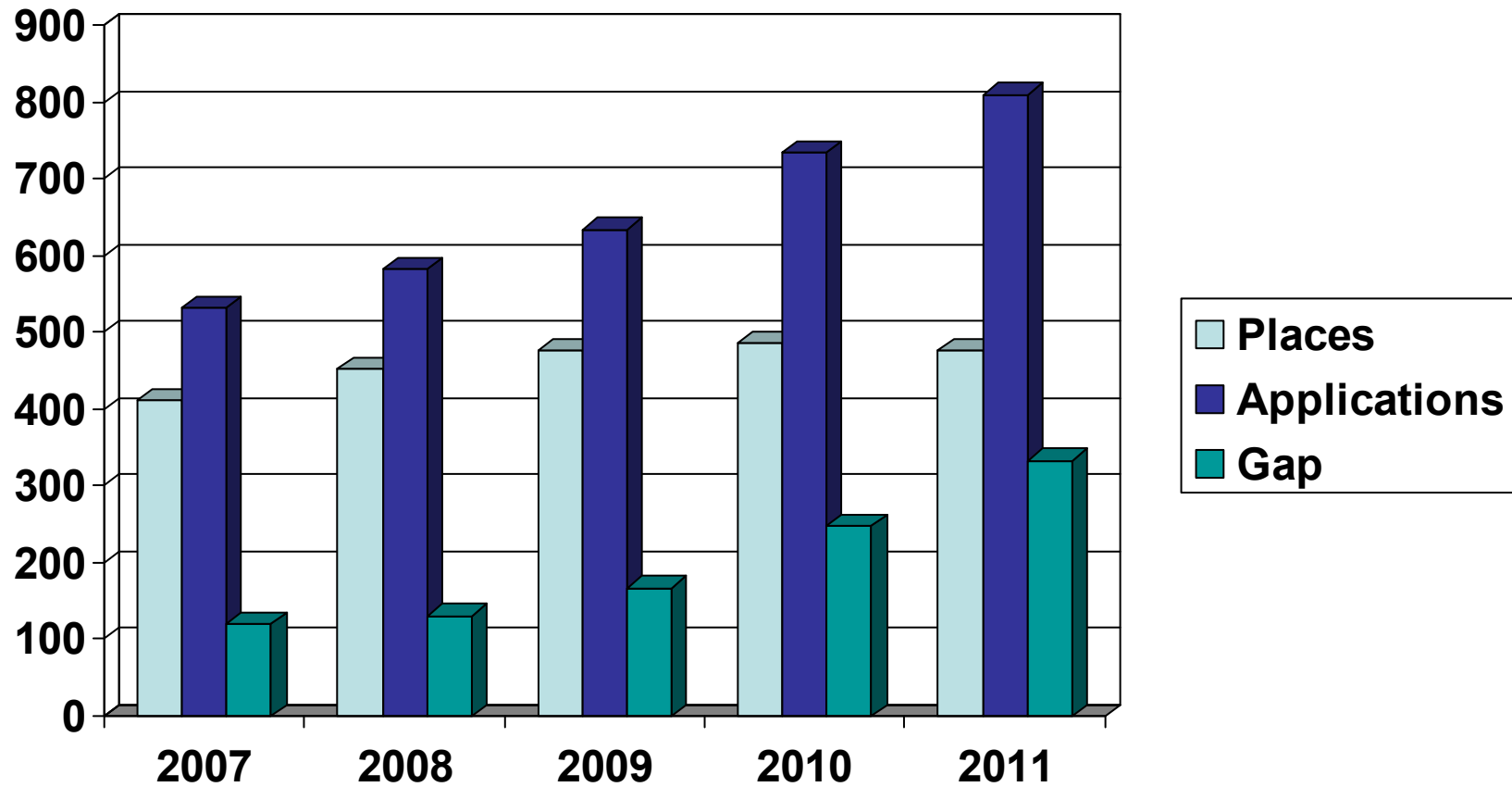
# Context

- Funding cuts to Higher Education of 15% in the 3 years from 2010/11
- Reduction in the numbers of courses
- Reduction in the resource per student (although many universities are seeking to preserve teaching and learning inputs)
- A review of student finance which is likely to result in higher tuition fees (although LibDem MPs can abstain)

# If the Cap Fits

- In 2009 the Government introduced a cap on student numbers based on the intake level for 2008
- Late in 2009 they added some extra numbers for STEM subjects
- In 2010 they have taken away these places and most intakes will be less than the 2008 level.
- The 2010 budget re-instated 20,000 STEM places for one year but the Conservatives will provide 10,000 additional places for the same period.
- There is a fine of £3,700 for each student recruited above the cap.
- University of Cumbria fined £1m, De Montfort University fined £4m, University of Gloucestershire fined £70k

# The problem – in numbers and....



# The coalition Government says...

- **Higher Education is on ‘shaky foundations’**
  - There are some HEIs whose funding situation is under question, including Cumbria and London Metropolitan.
- **It will wait until Browne reports before deciding what to do about funding and that ‘tough decisions’ will have to be taken**
  - There is likely to be a widespread debate about who should fund HE
  - Any changes won’t affect 2011 students but could hit 2012 students
  - Deferrers beware!
- **Higher Education requires a ‘radical overhaul’**
  - There is likely to be a debate about the purpose of universities and possibly some thoughts about re-introducing the binary divide

# The cost of everything and...

- The UCAS tariff includes 38 specific qualifications;
- AAT NVQ
- Advanced Diploma
- Advanced Extension Awards
- ASDAN Community Volunteering qualification
- British Horse Society Awards
- CACHE Award
- Cambridge Pre-U qualification
- Certificate of Personal Effectiveness
- Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
- Higher Sports Leader Awards
- Ifs School of Finance Certificate and Diploma
- Key Skills
- iMedia Users Certificate and Diploma
- Foundation Diploma in Art and Design
- Speech and Drama Examinations at grades 6,7 and 8
- Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma
- International Baccalaureate

## ...the value of nothing?

- ‘In order to help differentiate between the many well-qualified students applying to the University of Cambridge with A levels, achievement in particular A2 level units may also be included in a conditional offer.’ (Cambridge – who do not accept the Advanced Diploma or Key Skills)
- ‘Not acceptable’ (Lancaster)
- ‘ASL must include A-Level in a traditional academic subject at grade A.’ (Leeds, who also require LNAT test)
- ‘Creative & Media at grade A. Engineering at grade A. Information Technology at grade A. Society, Health & Development at grade A. Construction & the Built Environment at grade A.’ (York)

# In practice

- Very few applicants coming through with Advanced Diplomas
- - a total of 700 UCAS applicants in 2010
- Very few parents of year 9 students aware of the alternatives to A levels
- Large increase in numbers of students with Access to Higher Education Diploma, and the introduction of grading has led to higher entry requirements
- Increase in Pre-U candidates 1300 in 2010 and 2000 AQA Bacc applicants
- Large numbers of 'repeat applicants'
- Later decisions by Universities
- Offers on average 7 tariff points higher than in 2009
- Increasing 'strategic' use of the UCAS tariff
- Increasing numbers of complaints/appeals
- 2011 entry requirements are 'published' but they are likely to change
- Half of unsuccessful applicants plan to re-apply in the following year
- 6000 offers from 10 institutions include an A\* requirement

## SPA guidance – an ‘exceptional’ year

- Concerns have been expressed to SPA from schools and HEIs about late changes in entry requirements and offers mid-cycle. Whilst noting that this is not good practice, we recognise that this is an exceptional year for admissions.
  - Plan offer making tactics and in preparation for confirmation and clearing
  - Operate a 'gathered field' of those applicants still to be considered
  - Consider closing courses that are full using the new UCAS procedures
  - Use the UCAS 'reason for rejection' facility even if it's a generic statement such as, "This year we have had a rise in applications for limited places. In order to stay within our permitted targets we have to evaluate each application very carefully against our agreed criteria. Unfortunately, this means that you were amongst the many well qualified applicants who were unsuccessful."
  - Make sure offers, particularly tariff offers, are carefully and precisely worded to cover exactly what you expect the applicant to achieve, rather than being too broad.
  - Make sure that any changes to your normal practices are clear on your website and also in your Entry Profiles.

# Advice for students

- Start planning from level 2 qualification.
- Check carefully all the small print for entry routes.
- Check carefully the requirements of your chosen career. The currency of degrees is changing just as much as the currency of entry qualifications.
- Choose Insurances carefully.
- Work hard – grades will matter.
- Have a plan ‘B’ – think about part time study or work-based learning opportunities.
- Don’t believe everything you read in the press.
- Use all the resources available including Unistats and University Open Days.
- Remember why you want to do this.