

EMBARGOED TO 0001 hrs TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2004

SHA strongly welcomes the Schwartz Report

The Secondary Heads Association strongly supports the recommendations of the Schwartz Report and particularly welcomes the commitment of the Secretary of State to establish an implementation group for Post Qualifications Applications (PQA).

SHA General Secretary, Dr John Dunford, said

I very much hope that, after 10 years of talking, PQA will at last be implemented by British universities. It is possible to overcome the practical difficulties that previously blocked the introduction of PQA. In October SHA, HMC and GSA will produce a report setting out a detailed plan for PQA, which will produce a fairer, more transparent and much more efficient application process for university.

I welcome Professor Schwartz's recommendation that universities should set out more clearly the criteria on which offers will be made. At present the admissions process is a game, in which the applicants are not told all the rules.

I welcome the recognition in Professor Schwartz's report that a more level playing field will be created if the background of applicants is taken into account by universities when making offers of places. I agree that state schools, many of which have excellent records in university admissions, do not need blanket discrimination in favour of their students. But potential, as well as achievement, should be taken into account in individual cases as Professor Schwartz proposes.