

University of the West of Scotland Curriculum for Excellence Statement

Background

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) embraces Curriculum for Excellence and welcomes the new National Qualifications, recognising the importance of the development of key skills, aspirational outlook, knowledge and drive to succeed.

The new qualifications will have an impact on the Academic Entry Requirements at UWS. This statement aims to outline our commitment to developing transparent and fair new admissions criteria in line with our current Admissions Policy where Curriculum for Excellence applicants are considered if they have the necessary knowledge and skills, irrespective of the route travelled through the Senior Phase, S4 to S6. It is hoped that the information provided will enable those students entering S4 in August 2013 to make an informed selection of subjects with confidence through understanding our requirements.

Included within this statement are a few exemplar learner journeys modelled on individuals undertaking different patterns of school provision in the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

New Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence enhances the Scottish Curriculum in schools and in preparing learners for the journey from senior phase to further and higher education and the world of employment. Notwithstanding the possibility that some schools may bypass National 5 qualifications in S4, the new national qualifications which replace Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2, along with the revised Higher and Advanced Higher, will continue to provide the benchmark for admissions criteria.

At present secondary school pupils study Standard Grades, Intermediates 1 and 2, Highers and Advanced Highers. However, from 2015 pupils will undertake National 4 and National 5 which will replace Standard Grade General and Credit, and Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications. The table below lists the new qualifications and what they will replace:

SCQF Level	New Qualification	Current Qualification
4	National 4	Standard Grade (General level) Intermediate 1
5	National 5	Standard Grade (Credit level) Intermediate 2
6	Higher (new) 2014/15	Higher
7	Advanced Higher (new) 2015/16	Advanced Higher

The new National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will still continue to be graded entirely through external assessment, with examinations continuing to play a key role. However, the new qualifications will have a greater emphasis on skills and skills-based approaches to learning and assessment than the current qualifications. Learners will develop the type of skills (including higher order thinking and independent learning skills) which will prepare them for higher education and will be able to apply them in order to gain a better knowledge and understanding of the subject, including the key concepts which underpin it.

Therefore, as learners progress from nursery to S6 as part of the Curriculum for Excellence journey there will be a variety of key factors creating the overall student profile. The University believes that in expanding the broad educational experience from S1 and S2 to

encompass S1, S2 and S3, with specific subject choice later (at the end of S3 instead of S2), Curriculum for Excellence provides a strong platform for progression into the Senior Phase across S4 to S6, effectively the start of the journey to obtain qualifications for post-school lifelong learning, not least for entry to higher education. We understand that the design of the S1 to S3 curriculum should allow learners to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills with which to prepare for a greater specialisation through qualifications and personal achievement gained across S4 to S6.

The University understands that there is no single model of when students are presented for Highers, or that learners necessarily will all have the same opportunities to study for a full range of Highers in a single year. We also note that it is possible to study a subject at Higher level, building on prior learning in the Broad General Education, even though no qualification in that subject is held at National 4 or National 5 level.

General Principles

The Academic Entry Requirements at UWS are the minimum standards and subjects required for entry into our degree programmes. However, achieving these does not always guarantee entry as there is competition for places and many of our programmes require applicants to also perform satisfactorily at interview or audition. Consequently we may need to ask for more than the minimum. This additional entry criteria might take the form of further academic qualifications, or better grades, and an applicant's academic profile will normally be the most significant factor in our decision making. Additionally, Academic Admissions Officers at UWS scrutinise the personal statement plus any contextual data, including evidence of wider experiences and/or achievement, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, volunteering, caring or part-time employment, which may help to strengthen an applicant's profile.

As part of the University Regulations at UWS it is expected that students will be applying whilst studying a minimum of three Higher or two Advanced Higher subjects in at least one of the Senior Phase years – S4 or S5 or S6. Please note that UWS does not double-count Highers and Advanced Highers in the same subject. In addition as long as applicants meet the National 5 requirements pertinent to their chosen course the overall number of National Qualifications achieved in S4 will not be of interest to the university in determining suitability.

Highers and Advanced Highers

Entry Requirements are expressed predominantly with reference to Highers. Whilst UWS recognises the value of Advanced Highers and Scottish Baccalaureates with regard to the skills gained and preparedness for entry to University, they will not form part of our standard SCQF Level 7 (Year 1) Entry Requirements. UWS shall however consider applicants with Advanced Highers and Baccalaureates for SCQF Level 8 (Year 2) entry instead. Please note that not every School accepts applicants into SCQF Level 8 (Year 2) with these qualifications. Ultimately, we hope that our applicants will be following as broad a range of subjects as possible which will challenge them academically. For those who do not choose to enter the University in SCQF Level 8 (Year 2), Advanced Highers and the Scottish Baccalaureate may be considered for entry where the minimum entry requirements were not met in S5 achievement.

The entry requirements for all of our courses specify a level of achievement that is preferably attained by the end of S5, but we will continue to consider applications that have attained Highers across S5 and S6.

UWS will consider students who have studied Higher(s) over two years and taken at a single sitting at the end of S5 as being from 1 sitting. The level of attainment by the end of S5 is all that is regarded. Students choosing to resit a Higher, achieved in S5, where they achieved a

grade C or below in their first sitting, will be required to achieve a B or above in their second sitting. This does not apply if the Higher at Grade C was achieved in S4 even if the resit was not until S6.

Where an applicant does not hold a subject that is required at National 5, they must have achieved, or be predicted to achieve a Higher or Advanced Higher pass in the subject. Depending upon the grade required at National 5, this may equate to achieving a B or C at Higher or Advanced Higher.

Where National 4 and National 5 qualifications are being taken, UWS will expect candidates to be studying a range and variety of subjects. Where there is a requirement to hold minimum qualifications in particular subjects, such as English and Maths, this will be at Intermediate 2 or National 5 grade C or above. Please note that UWS will not be looking for a minimum total number of Nationals.

Where a student is in S6 and receives an unconditional offer of admission, we expect full and continued participation in the subjects declared within the UCAS application, particularly if their study involves Advanced Highers, as the self-directed learning and project-based work will have direct relevance to the University environment.

Where an offer of admission is conditional and an applicant has any query relating to the terms of the condition, or their ability to achieve the condition (for instance because the subjects being studied at school have changed following submission of the UCAS application), we would encourage them to contact our Admissions Office as soon as possible in order to clarify whether or not an amended offer needs or can be made. The Admissions Office email address is admissions@uws.ac.uk

The University will consider applicants that have Advanced Highers and if the grades are at BBB they may even be considered for SCQF Level 8 (Year 2) entry, but this depends on the degree and the specific subjects taken at Advanced Higher. Applicants who are not successful in gaining entry to SCQF Level 8 (Year 2), but achieved the required Higher entry criteria, will be offered a place on SCQF Level 7 (Year 1 of the degree).

Exemplar Learner Journeys

Jill's Journey – (Applying to BA Hons Education)

Jill attends a secondary school whose approach is to offer a two-year programme of learning for National 5 and Higher, where National 5 qualifications can be bypassed and Highers can be taken in a two-year programme across S4-S5, with a single diet of exams at the end of S5.

In S6, the school offers a combination of Highers, Advanced Highers and Scottish Baccalaureates in Science and Social Sciences. The school also provides a number of other qualifications designed to broaden their learners' educational experience and to help them develop a wider range of skills for learning, life and work, such as Personal Development and Employability qualifications, Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and extra-curricular classes or activities, such as drama and music.

At the start of S4 Jill undertook her programme of learning which included five Highers in Biology, Chemistry, English, Maths and French where she went on to gain three grade B and 2 grade C's at the end of S5.

In S6 Jill took two further Highers in Geography and Modern Studies gaining respectively, grades A and C.

Jill was aware of how competitive entry to the BA Hons Education programme was and so was keen to have some relevant experience to enhance her application and so she secured a placement week as part of her S6 curriculum visiting her local primary school to gain insight into working with children and the demands of the modern curriculum. Jill also volunteers at a local youth club every Friday night with children attending from age 11 to 16.

When writing her UCAS application early in S6, Jill was aware that there was pressure on her to achieve the required academic qualifications in S6 for entry to BA Hons Education. Jill knew how competitive it was to gain entry to the degree and so worked hard on her personal statement. She focused on her experience within the local primary school and the skills she gained by working with a broad range of children at the youth club and was able to show an understanding of the importance of having enthusiasm, good inter-personal relationships and excellent communication skills within the teaching profession.

Jill applied for teacher education in four universities before the UCAS deadline of 15 January. The minimum academic entry requirement for Education at UWS is four Highers at grades ABBB, which she achieved over two sittings. The University was also sufficiently impressed by her personal statement, strong academic reference and interview performance.

The University made her a conditional offer based on her achievements to date asking her to gain an A pass in one of her Highers.

Jill is now studying BA Hons Education at UWS.

Jill's Achievement & Progression Route During the Senior Phase of CfE						
S4 – S5 Single diet	Higher Biology	Higher Chemistry	Higher English	Higher Maths	Higher French	Recognition of Wider Achievement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Volunteering at local youth club ➤ Placement week at local primary school
Achievement	Grade B	Grade C	Grade B	Grade B	Grade C	
S6	Higher Geography		Higher Modern Studies			
Achievement	Grade A		Grade C			

Richard's Journey – (Applying to BA Commercial Music)

Richard attended a secondary school which has a policy of taking National 5 courses in S4 and Highers in S5. In S6 additional Highers and a range of Advanced Highers are available in a number of subjects. The school does not offer the Scottish Baccalaureates but it does offer awards and experiences that encapsulate the aims of Curriculum for Excellence's Recognition of Wider Achievement, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.

In S4 Richard took six National 5 courses in English, French, History, Maths, Modern Studies and Music. He achieved, respectively, grades BBBBCC.

Moving into S5 Richard decided that he wanted to study Commercial Music and so he took four Highers in English, Music, History and Chemistry gaining grades BBBB. This meant that Richard had still to satisfy the entry requirements for Commercial Music of BBBC at UWS.

As entry to Commercial Music is competitive and requires selected candidates to perform satisfactorily at an audition, Richard took two additional Highers in Modern Studies and Geography and an Advanced Higher in Music in S6, where he respectively achieved a grade B, grade C and grade B. As Richard was given a conditional offer by UWS on gaining a grade C from one of his Highers he met the academic entry requirements.

Richard was aware that an audition was required for entry to Commercial Music at UWS and that even if he achieved the academic qualifications by the end of S6 he still had to perform well at this audition. Richard was confident as he plays guitar in a band that has regular bookings at weddings and he had posted video clips on You Tube to positive reviews. Richard had participated in the initial stages of the Duke of Edinburgh's Silver Award in S5/S6 but due to the commitments of the band he had to withdraw.

When he came in for his audition Richard was given a tour of the facilities, an introduction to the programme team and the content of the programme, followed by his audition. Whilst other auditions were progressing Richard had to complete a piece of writing that asked him to research the music industry, describe his own relationship with music and outline his career aspirations. Richard's audition went well and he enjoyed meeting with academic staff and seeing the campus facilities.

In his UCAS application Richard wrote a strong personal statement where he explained his interest in Commercial Music, highlighting how important he felt the links that UWS had with industry were and how he felt the combination of academic subjects that he had achieved in S5 and was undertaking in S6 helped prepare him for higher education. He also described how his Advanced Higher in Music provided the opportunity for him to take his keen interest in Music a step further, developing aspirational skills and attributes.

He used the personal statement to focus on his strong and improving academic profile, as well as his experience in the band and initial skills developed as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which helped his referee (from his school) to provide a strong reference for him.

Richard is now studying Commercial Music at the UWS.

Richard's Achievement & Progression Route During the Senior Phase of CfE

Richard's Achievement & Progression Route During the Senior Phase of CfE							Recognition of Wider Achievement
S4	National 5 English	National 5 French	National 5 History	National 5 Maths	National 5 Modern Studies	National 5 Music	
Achievement	B	B	B	B	C	C	
S5	Higher English	Higher History	Higher Music	Higher Chemistry			
Achievement	B	B	B	D			
S6	Advanced Higher Music		Higher Modern Studies		Higher Geography		
Achievement	B		B		C		