

UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST of SCOTLAND

POLICY TITLE		
Admissions Policy		
DOCUMENT DEPARTMENT	AUTHOR	POLICY OWNER
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EITHER For public access online (internet)? <i>Tick as appropriate</i>		OR For staff access only (intranet)? <i>Tick as appropriate</i>
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		1.1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Impact on Other University Policies Tick as appropriate		If Yes – Please List
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		RPL Criminal Convictions Ant- Bribery Policy Data Protection
Who should be aware of this Policy?		Included within Central Induction Process?
All staff and in particular - staff with an admissions function Prospective Students and Applicants.		Yes

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The University of the West of Scotland's Admissions Policy has been designed to support the attainment of the University Strategic Objectives in the following areas:

- To be the university of choice for students, staff and employers;
- To provide a relevant, accessible and high quality learning experience which produces confident, enterprising and skilled graduates;
- To be responsive to regional issues and needs;
- To have a strong international focus and awareness in all that we do.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

2.1 This policy applies to all (UK, EU, Non-EU and International) undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study irrespective of mode of attendance.

2.2 The Policy complies with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B2 – Admissions) and has been guided by the principles outlined in the Schwartz Report on Fair Admissions and good practice guidelines disseminated by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA).

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 This Policy has been developed to provide transparency in the admissions processes and practices of the University of the West of Scotland, ensuring that a quality service is given to all applicants. Our priority for admissions is to match prospective students with the programme of study that best meets their academic needs, vocational needs and individual circumstances, while ensuring that our institutional strategic objectives are met. In achieving this, we make a commitment that our approach to the admissions of students is transparent, fair, honest, consistent, accessible, personalised and timely.

3.2 Admissions Policy Objectives -

3.2.1 Ensure our applicants receive an applicant-focussed service.

3.2.2 Admit students who have the potential to succeed and benefit from our programmes, thereby supporting student progression and success.

3.2.3 Widen access to higher education to encourage applications from students from under-represented groupings; working in partnership with:–

- Schools;
- Colleges - ensuring our courses are accessible and capable of receiving articulating students at a variety of entry levels;

- Communities;
- Other HEIs.

3.2.4 Support industry-led, work-based learning.

3.2.5 Promote equality of opportunity and diversity.

3.3 UWS will achieve these objectives by ensuring that-

3.3.1 Our Admissions policy and procedures are clearly documented and easily accessible.

3.3.2 Decisions are made consistently and fairly in line with clearly stated selection procedures.

3.3.3 Our selection assessment methods are reliable, valid and support the admission of students with the potential to succeed.

3.3.4 Information relating to programme information and entry requirements is clear and transparent (in a format appropriate to their needs) and subject to annual review through the formal academic reporting structure.

3.3.5 Applications are considered on an individual basis with reference to information in the application including academic achievements, personal statement and academic or work/personal reference. Each Application will be given equal consideration irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief, maternity and pregnancy or sexual orientation.

3.3.6 All Staff involved in the admissions process (Admissions Team, School Academic Admissions Officers, Research Staff- Graduate School and individual Directors of Study) receive appropriate training and guidance to enable them to make decisions in a consistent, timely and transparent manner.

3.3.7 We continually monitor and annually review our admissions procedures in order that our admissions service is responsive and applicant-focussed, compliant with relevant legislation and best practice in Admissions.

4. Procedure - The Admission Process

4.1 Application

4.1.1 Applications for full time undergraduate programmes are made via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

4.1.2 Applications for all other programmes, i.e., Postgraduate, Part-time Undergraduate and Research programmes are made directly to the University via the UWS online application.

- 4.1.3 Acknowledgement of Application Once a prospective student applies to us - within 24 hours of receiving their application an automatic email acknowledgement is sent to the applicant plus specific information relating to their application i.e., gathered field (some Schools operate a 'gathered field' approach, where applications are considered as a batch on an agreed date); audition and/or interview. The School will subsequently send the applicant an invitation (date, time, room and campus) and further details of the selection process within 28 days. For research applications, the Graduate School will communicate with applicants during the recruitment cycle. Research applications will be considered on published timelines depending on the point in the year.
- 4.1.4 Fees If the correct applicant information is supplied UWS ensures that applicants know the rate at which they would pay fees prior to enrolment (Home or Overseas). Normally the fee rate is confirmed within ten working days of receipt of all appropriate information. For Research programmes, the fee rate is published in the Fee Schedule but details of stipends or scholarships offered will only be confirmed at the time of the offer being issued.
- 4.1.5 Requests to Defer a Place An applicant can only defer a place by one year, regardless of whether this was determined before or after offer. The opportunity to defer an offer is not available to all programmes. Applicants intending to defer are therefore advised to check with the Admissions Office prior to applying. Places secured through Clearing or in the UCAS Adjustment period are valid only for that year of entry and may not be deferred. While applications for research programmes may be deferred depending on circumstances, offers of funding, stipends and scholarships cannot be deferred except by written agreement in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.1.6 Widening Participation and Transition UWS is actively involved in working with applicants from courses/initiatives designed to support transition e.g. the Top-Up Programme; Articulation provision, Care Leavers, Routes for All; Step-Up; Lothians Equal Access Programmes for Schools; Access to Primary Education and Scottish Wider Access Programme. Applicants must confirm their involvement in Access provision on their application.
- 4.1.7 Advanced Entry an applicant seeking advanced entry is considered on an individual basis taking into account previous study and experience, e.g., HNC, HND, A Level. Applicants who wish to be considered for advanced entry should state this clearly on their UCAS applications *Point of Entry* box and ensure sufficient information is included in the application to enable a decision on advanced entry to be taken. The South West Articulation Hub based in the University of the West of Scotland is embedding a sustainable infrastructure that supports articulation across the region.

<http://www.uws.ac.uk/swah/>. Applications for advanced entry to research programmes will only be considered where the applicant has been a registered research student at another institution.

- 4.1.8 Additional Measurement of Potential To attract and retain students (from a wide and diverse community) who have the potential to complete their programme of study successfully and benefit from the experience, UWS identifies additional means of assessing potential to demonstrate an ability to meet selection criteria, e.g., Top-Up profiles, successful Summer School completion, formative Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- 4.1.9 Applicants with a disability The University strives to be an inclusive learning environment and welcomes and encourages applications from persons with a disability. All Applicants who are made an offer will be sent a questionnaire with their offer giving them the opportunity to disclose any disability they may have. Applicants who have specific support needs are encouraged to detail and make these known to the University's Enabling Support Team as soon as possible so that any appropriate support arrangements can be made in advance of enrolment.
- 4.1.10 Procedure for applicants disclosing a criminal conviction Where an applicant indicates that they have a criminal conviction, the Admissions Manager will contact the applicant for more information regarding the offence. The Admissions Manager will liaise with the School/Department involved and the application will be assessed in accordance with the Criminal Conviction policy in order to ensure that neither the applicant nor the University will be put at risk if the applicant becomes a member of the University. The applicant's information will only be shared with those individuals who are involved in the consideration of the application and the applicant will be kept informed throughout the process.

Where an applicant has a pending conviction and is able to provide details of the incident this is reviewed by the Admissions Manager and if deemed to be a low risk offence an offer may be made. If at a subsequent court hearing they are found guilty the status of the student is reviewed at this stage.

In addition, programmes associated with health, education, social work, sport and other regulated professions may require applicants to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme through Disclosure Scotland prior to commencement of the programme. Where a PVG Scheme record reveals a conviction which impacts upon a prospective student's suitability for the programme, the place may be withdrawn, before or after the student has completed enrolment and started the programme. Further details on the above procedure are available on the University's Criminal Convictions Policy.

- 4.1.11 Fraudulent Statements/Omissions/Admission to the University is subject to applicants disclosing all facts and information relevant to their application. If, during the consideration of an application, an applicant is discovered to have

omitted any information requested in the instructions or the application form, or has made any misrepresentation or given false information, the University reserves the right to withdraw an offer of a place and/or dismiss their application.

4.1.12 Bribery The Bribery Act 2010 introduced offences for acts of bribery by individuals or by persons associated with relevant commercial organisations. Responsibilities regarding the prevention of bribery and the procedures to be followed when bribery is suspected are set out in the University's Anti-Bribery Policy & Procedure.

4.2 Selection and Decision Making

4.2.1 Offer decisions are made by Admissions Office¹ (Centralised Support Service), Academic Admissions Officers (School based) and the Graduate School in line with clearly stated selection procedures and are applied consistently. Selection procedures are available, on request, from the Admissions Manager and cover –

- Undergraduate admissions;
- Postgraduate admissions;
- Research admissions.

4.2.2 All admissions staff (academics and admissions team) involved in decision making are subject to continuous professional development and decisions made are verified to ensure quality of decision making across programmes.

4.2.3 For the majority of programmes our assessment methods focus on the information contained in the application and assess the applicant's suitability for study in terms of their academic qualifications (actual and predicted) in relation to agreed entry criteria, relevant work/life experience and subject interest. If we require further information with which to make our decision we will contact applicants directly about this.

4.2.4 International Students/The University accepts a broad range of international qualifications and each application is assessed on an individual basis from each country to ascertain the equivalence to UK qualifications. Requirements will also depend on the subject area to be studied and the level of entry applied for.

The Admissions Office also liaises with the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC) when assessing international qualifications. More information on Non-EU Applications is available at <http://www.uws.ac.uk/International>

4.2.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy is aimed at all applicants to UWS wishing to have prior learning considered for

¹ See Appendix 2 – Role of Admissions Office/Role of Academic Admissions Officer/Graduate School

entry or advanced standing. The University recognises both certificated and experiential learning irrespective of the context in which it is achieved. Accordingly, the University will accredit alternative forms of learning, provided these can be evidenced in writing and authenticated at the appropriate level. UWS requires a credit rating to be assigned to all learning imported into a programme of study through RPL. For credit to be transferred into a programme of study it must have been subject to reliable and valid methods of assessment.

4.2.6 Use of Changed Programmes Offers /Changes to Programme during Admissions Cycle if we cannot offer a place on the programme applied for, we may offer an alternative programme instead. This can happen at the initial application stage or at confirmation. We take all steps to avoid changes to a programme after it has opened for applications however, when changes do occur, the Admission Manager contacts each applicant and provides alternative options for consideration.

Where an applicant already holds an active offer for the programme/year concerned, we do our best to ensure that the applicant's study intentions can be met. In this case the Admission Manager will facilitate one or more of the following options as circumstances allow:

- entry to the original programme/year as planned;
- deferring our offer by one year;
- transferring our offer to an alternative programme for the original year of entry;
- transferring the offer to the same or similar programme at another University;
- or if all of the above options have been exhausted, cancelling our offer.

The applicant will also be advised and supported through the necessary UCAS procedure, where relevant.

4.3 Decision

Our initial offer decision will be one of the following:

- An unconditional offer; or
- to offer a place conditional on the results of
 - academic assessments and/or;
 - English language tests and/or;
(A minimum IELTS score of 6 or above (5.5 in each component) is acceptable as evidence of proficiency in English. The English Language test should be current, in line with UKVI Approved Test Listing, and is passed no more than 2 years prior to the date of visa application.
 - satisfactory background checks, and/or ;
 - additional measurements of potential/contextual data
- not to offer a place (unsuccessful decisions).

4.3.1 Applicants should normally receive our initial decision within 28 working days of receipt of application for programmes that select on application alone

(standard offers), or will be contacted by the School for an interview/assessment within 28 days where further selection activity is used (non-standard offers). Applicants are informed either through UCAS or directly by the Admissions Office by letter – dependent on the original type of application used.

- 4.3.2 Sponsorship under Tier4 of the Points Based System Full time applicants from outside the EEA who require Sponsorship under Tier 4 of the Points Based System, are assigned with a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) by UWS? normally within 48 working hours of receipt of the following: applicant's firm acceptance of our unconditional offer along with a usable image of the relevant pages of their passport, relevant deposit, acceptable evidence of funding & TB certificate (if applicable). plus. Prospective students from outside the EEA who do not request Tier 4 sponsorship are required to provide us with evidence of their right to enter and remain in the UK and appropriate UK Visa & Immigration approved English language entry requirements.

4.4 Reply

Applicants who are offered a place must tell UWS, by a given date, whether they intend to take up the place. This date is determined either by UCAS, or in the case of direct UWS applications within ten working days of issue of our initial decision. UCAS candidates may accept our offer either as their firm or their insurance choice.

- 4.4.1 Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants In order to support our transparent admissions process feedback will be provided on an individual basis in response to receiving a formal request (written or emailed) from the applicant within 6 weeks of the decision being made. The request must include UCAS Personal Identification Number where applicable; full name; date of birth and Programme name. In line with our Data Protection Policy & Procedure we will not be able to provide feedback to anyone other than the Applicant unless they have given us written permission to do so.
- 4.4.2 Appeals - An Appeal is a request for a formal review of the outcome on an admission decision. Applicants who consider that they have valid grounds for appealing against the outcome of a selection decision should write to the Admissions Manager, explaining fully, the reasons for the Appeal. If, in light of additional information which was not available at the time of selection is now available, an offer may be amended.
- 4.4.3 Complaints Procedure - If you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. Full information on the University's complaints procedure is available at <http://www.uws.ac.uk/about-uws/governance/court-and-senate-office/complaints/>

4.5 Confirmation

If an applicant accepts our offer of a place, made conditionally on pending results of academic and/or English language assessments, they are told our final decision normally within fifteen working days of our receipt of final/confirmed results. In addition, in light of additional information which was not available at the time of selection, an offer may be amended or, in exceptional circumstances, withdrawn.

The University reserves the right to correct errors where they have been made in the communication of decisions and offers. However, an offer made in error where all conditions have been satisfied will only be withdrawn with the applicant's consent.

5. Enrolment, Joining Instructions and Induction

Applicants who have accepted our unconditional offer firmly or whose conditional place has been confirmed will be directed to online enrolment web pages where they will access joining and induction instructions before the start date of their programme.

6. Use of Applicant Data

A declaration of consent on the UCAS form and direct entry form application gives permission to the University to process personal and sensitive data (ethnic origin, disability, criminal conviction). This enables those involved with the selection and admissions process to respond to identified additional needs, to follow University policy relating to criminal convictions and to enable the University to compile its internal student record.

7. Knowledge and Skills

The knowledge and skills required to implement this policy will be transferred during the induction process for new staff, on-going training/updating for existing staff and by email updates.

8. Health and Safety Implications

There are no Health and Safety issues associated with the use of this policy.

9. Sustainability

Issues will be considered as part of the admissions process.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 – Role of the Admissions Office/Academic Admissions Officer/Graduate School

UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST of SCOTLAND

Equality Impact Assessment	
Faculty Dept.	Admissions/Student Link. Credit, RPL and Admissions Committee
Policy	Admissions Policy
Author This should be the person who is responsible for the Impact assessment of the policy, service, function, decision etc.	Fiona Andrews
Partners decision makers implementers etc Identify who else will need to be involved. This can be decision makers, frontline staff implementing the policy, partner/parent organisations, etc.	Academic and support staff with a responsibility for admissions.
Start date The EIA should be started prior to policy development or decision being taken. It should continue throughout the review process. For an existing policy, it needs to be ensured that any changes identified as necessary can be implemented.	First Draft March 2011
Effective date of implementation The EIA will need to inform decision-making so the date should take this into account. This may be the date on which the policy is put to committee or when a decision is required. It is not however the end of the EIA cycle, which links to review (below).	Following Senate Approval
Relevance This should outline what the relevance of the policy, service, decision; etc is to the equality groups (remembering to consider the duties to promote understanding and equal opportunity and not only the duty to eliminate discrimination). Where it is concluded that the policy is not relevant, this should be recorded	This policy is aimed at all applicants to the University of the West of Scotland and all staff involved in Admissions.

<p>here with the reasons and evidence. The EIA can then proceed to 'decision making and quality control'.</p> <p>Relevance may be obvious, in which case go straight to an assessment and detailed collection of data. In other instances some basic data may need to be collected first to identify relevance.</p>	
<p>Aim of Policy/decision</p> <p>It will help to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the policy or decision needed? • What do we hope to achieve by it? • How will we ensure that it works as intended? (e.g. that there is no discrimination in practice) <p>This is not always easy and a discussion will probably be needed between those who define the policy or make the decision and those who implement it</p>	<p>This Policy has been developed to provide transparency in the admissions processes and practices of the University of the West of Scotland, ensuring that a quality service is given to all applicants.</p>
<p>Available evidence</p> <p>Identify what evidence is available and set it out here. This includes data and evidence from involvement and consultation</p>	<p>PMIS reports and Equality Annual report</p>
<p>Evidence Gaps</p> <p>Identify where there are gaps in the evidence and set out how these will be filled</p>	<p>The Policy must meet the needs of all applicants. Further data on how well this is achieved will be collected in due course, e.g., Articulation, Contextual data.</p>
<p>Involvement and consultation</p> <p>What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this decision, policy or service and what were the results? What additional involvement and consultation will be needed? Report the results</p>	<p>The Credit, RPL and Admissions Committee will be asked at its March 2012 meeting how best to involve and consult staff and students. External bodies will also be consulted, e.g., SPA</p>
<p>What is the actual/likely impact?</p> <p>Consider the impact in respect of the individual requirements of each of the protected characteristics (Age, Disability, Gender re-assignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation) to which the policy or decision is relevant. The assessment can be supported with a set of key questions to identify the effect, tailored to the area being</p>	<p>The likely impact is to further embed and encourage a fair and transparent admissions process within UWS.</p> <p>No members of the university community should be adversely affected.</p>

<p>considered. These should cover all relevant aspects of the policy or decision and, where appropriate, the different options. Broadly the following should be identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is affected positively? • Who is affected negatively? • Will the policy or decision have the anticipated effect? <p>Please give a full explanation of your reasoning in answering these questions and document the actual or likely impact, along with the evidence used to explain how that conclusion was reached.</p>	
<p>Address the impact</p> <p>Identify the range of options to address the impact Remember to consider each of the general duties. There are four possible options, more than one of which may apply to the policy or decision:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No major change. 2. Adjust the policy. 3. Continue the policy. 4. Stop and remove the policy. <p>Document the range of options and identify the effects of each. Identify the option(s) chosen and document the reasons for this.</p>	<p>1 – No major change</p>
<p>Monitoring and Review</p> <p>Set out the arrangements for reviewing the actual impact of a decision, new policy or changes to an existing policy once it has been implemented.</p>	<p>In line with all University wide policies, this policy & procedure will be subject to review at least every 3 years.</p> <p>Admissions procedures will be subject to regular monitor and review to ensure compliant with legislation and best practice in Admissions processes.</p>
<p>Action Plan</p> <p>An action plan should be developed, monitored and reviewed. This should include evaluation of the changes to measure whether they have had their intended effect, and of the outcomes achieved.</p> <p>The action plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actions identified as necessary • details of who is responsible for implementation of actions • timescale for implementation 	<p>Development Workshops will be set up for staff dealing with admissions processes.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timescale and actions for review, and • details of how the effects of the actions will be evaluated to measure if expected outcomes are achieved in practice. 	
<p>Decision making and quality control Includes sign-off by a responsible officer. (e.g. Head of School, Head of Department) The EIA will then be considered by the Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group.</p>	<p>To be discussed at Credit, RPL and Admissions Committee.</p> <p>When recommended by the above Committee this policy will go to LTAB for approval and then to Senate.</p>

Role of the Admissions Office

The Admissions Manager is responsible for ensuring that admissions processes for all applicants are clear and updated regularly; The Admissions Office Team is responsible for –

- Training of Academic Admissions Officers to provide updates on emergent issues, good practice and sector developments, including input from UCAS, Supporting Professionalism in Admissions;
- Collation of standard entry criteria received from Academic Schools to be used for standard offer processing;
- Acknowledgement and consideration of all applications;
- Making of standard decisions according to agreed criteria;
- Forwarding of non-standard applications to Academic Admissions Officers for consideration;
- Processing of decisions for all non-standard applications;
- Adhering to agreed timescales for communicating with applicants;
- Checking of Criminal Convictions in consultation with Academic Admissions Officers where appropriate;
- Coordination of requests from applicants for feedback;
- Coordination of appeals against Admissions decisions;
- Ensuring accuracy with prospectus entries;
- Liaison with UCAS, other relevant external bodies; IRO to support research application processing, Student Services regarding applicants with disabilities; the Lifelong Learning Academy regarding part time applicants and flexible programmes of study.

Role of the Academic Admissions Officer –this role is key to the successful operation of the Admissions Policy. The role is held by an academic member of staff in the appropriate School who will work closely with the Admissions Office. At the start of each cycle the Academic Admissions Officers (AAO) are responsible for –

- Providing the Admissions Office with details of entry criteria.
- Processing decisions for non-standard offers (those offers which have additional entry criteria ,e.g., portfolios, audition or interview of applicants)
- Making the decision (unconditional, conditional or unsuccessful) which the Admissions Office verifies. At the point of verification if further clarification re an offer decision is required the application is returned to the AAO for further consideration.
- AAOs are also involved throughout the year responding to enquiries from prospective applicants. Initial enquiries can be made directly to AAOs or filtered through Corporate Marketing (Uni-Direct). Contact may be via telephone, electronic sources (email or www) or by a personal visit.

- Contribution to the definition, monitoring and review of intake targets, entry criteria and offer levels;
- Mapping and reviewing the “fit” of new and established entry qualifications with the University curriculum.

Role of the Graduate School/Directors of Study

- The Graduate School will work with individual Directors of Study for prospective research programmes to consider and identify suitable applicants assessing them individually against agreed entry requirements. In addition the Graduate School will update Self Service Banner after making decisions to either offer or reject applicants following the Admissions Office standard procedures, considering where appropriate individual research proposals from candidates. Offers to be made by Directors of Study will be approved by the relevant Dean of School and the Chair of REAC.