



West Highland College, University of the Highlands and Islands

# Admissions Policy (Higher Education)

POL082

Lead Officer (Post):	Head of Student Services
Responsible Office/ Department:	Admissions
Responsible Committee:	Finance & General Purpose
Review Officer (Post):	Customer and Student Services Manager
Date policy approved:	01/09/2014
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Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	05/06/2018
Date of Privacy Impact Assessment:	05/06/2018

Accessible versions of this policy are available upon request. Please contact the Governance and Policy Officer on 01463 279000.

## Policy Summary

Overview	<p>The University of the Highlands and Islands operates a fair and open admissions process committed to equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. All applications are considered on merit and on the basis of ability to achieve, without discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender identity, pregnancy and maternity status, race, religion and/or belief, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic background. The university welcomes applications from all prospective students, including those with care experience or who act as carers, and aims to provide appropriate services to students with learning support needs or disabilities.</p>
Purpose	<p>To provide applicants, staff and university stakeholders guidance on how admissions to higher education programmes at the University of the Highlands and Islands operates, the admissions process, and responsibilities for ensuring fair and open admissions processes.</p>
Scope	<p>This policy covers all admissions to undergraduate and taught postgraduate higher education programmes (ie SCQF levels 7 to 11), from UK/EU and non-EU applicants, and is applied across the university partnership.</p>
Consultation	<p>Academic Council, admissions review group, contextualised admissions working group and the admissions practitioner group (ASG)</p>
Implementation and Monitoring	<p>Admissions staff, academic decision makers, academic partner senior managers and joint faculty executive will be responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.</p>
Risk Implications	<p>The policy is designed to inform potential applicants of our admissions processes ensuring they are appropriately informed of what they can expect and can make the right choices. The policy also ensures the processes are conducted by the university in an effective and fair manner.</p>

Link with Strategy	The university is committed to excellence in learning and teaching and to providing opportunities to all who may benefit, through innovative and inclusive approaches to learning and providing access to all allowing flexibility of entry.
Impact Assessment	Equality Impact Assessment:
	Privacy Impact Assessment:

## 1. Policy Statement

The university is a partnership of thirteen independent colleges and research institutions providing formal post-school education throughout the Highlands and Islands region. Integration of post-school education provides students with flexible progression through further (college) and higher (university) education and provides a single point of access for post-school education and training.

The university is committed to excellence in learning and teaching and to providing opportunities to all who may benefit through:

- Innovative and inclusive approaches to learning and teaching;
- Provision of programmes of study to facilitate entry to higher education for those from traditionally under represented backgrounds, including those who would otherwise be excluded by a combination of geography and personal circumstance;
- Flexibility of entry and certificated and accredited exit points, with students being encouraged to study to the highest level of their abilities.

## 2. Definitions

EU	European Union
UCAS	University and College Application System
UK	United Kingdom
UKVI	United Kingdom Visas and Immigration
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
Tier 4	<a href="#">Tier 4 (General) student visa</a>

## 3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance to applicants and staff on the processes relating to recruitment, selection and admissions to higher education at the University of the Highlands and Islands. The guidance in this policy is underpinned by the 'principles of fair admissions' as described in the admissions section of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) code of practice. This policy aims to be transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive, supported by appropriate structures and processes enabling the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Detailed procedures and best practice documentation are provided to staff separately, ensuring that admissions processes are conducted in a professional and competent manner.

The policy provides links to various sources of information, enabling applicants to make an informed decision on their choice of programme of study, including clear information on what is required of them prior to application both academic and non-academic through published entry requirements as well as what they can expect to happen once they have made an application.

## 4. Scope

This policy covers all admissions to undergraduate and taught postgraduate higher education programmes (ie SCQF levels 7 to 11), from UK/EU and non-EU applicants, and will be applied across the university partnership.

## 5. Exceptions

This policy does not apply to admissions to Further Education programmes. Please see the Admissions Policy (Further Education). This policy does not apply to admissions to postgraduate research study.

## 6. Notification

This policy will be available on SharePoint and on the Policies section of the university website.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1. Academic Council has overall responsibility for this policy, and for monitoring and reviewing its application and implementation.
- 7.2. The Head of marketing and planning is the policy owner and will monitor implementation and compliance with this policy. The policy owner also has responsibility for maintaining and reviewing this policy as a controlled document according to the university's policy guidance and procedures.
- 7.3. Admissions staff across the partnership, academic decision makers, academic partner senior managers and joint faculty executive, are responsible for following and implementing the processes described in this policy.
- 7.4. The admissions policy will be operated through agreed procedures, which are detailed in guidance documents for staff. The content of the admissions guidance will be reviewed and assessed regularly to ensure alignment with the university's admissions policy and good practice within the sector by the admissions manager and admissions practitioner group (ASG).

## 8. Procedures

### 8.1. Fairness and equality

The University of the Highlands and Islands operates a fair and open admissions process committed to equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. All applications are considered on merit and on the basis of ability to achieve, without discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender identity, pregnancy and maternity status, race, religion and/or belief, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic background disclosed to us by the applicant. The university welcomes applications from all prospective students, including those with care experience or who act as carers, *A carer is 'anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support'*

(*Carers Trust, 2018*). We also aim to provide appropriate services to students with learning support needs or disabilities. The university is committed to providing all our students with a positive experience while they are studying with us and to offering the support and opportunities that help them fulfil their potential.

This is facilitated by the provision of:

- General information to prospective students designed to be accessible and socially inclusive with information about facilities and resources, including course information and support services;
- Minimum entrance requirements for taught programmes of study which may include specific subject requirements;
- An approach to admissions whereby the wider context of an applicant's background may be taken into account where an application falls short of the standard entry criteria for a programme, or where there is competition for places on a programme;
- A process whereby lifelong and experiential learning and continuous professional development are appropriately recognised and rewarded in terms of entry requirements and academic credit.

The university will ensure equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection procedures by making available appropriate support during the application process including opportunities for students to visit their intended learning environments and/or discuss their particular needs with staff.

The university's admissions policy, practice and procedures operate in accordance with relevant UK Code of Practice for Higher Education.

## 8.2. Contextualised Admissions

The university operates a Contextualised Admissions policy and practice which formalises our existing inclusive approach to admissions. Contextual data provided on an application form is used to assess an applicant's prior attainment and potential to succeed in higher education in the context of the circumstances in which their attainment has been obtained. This would apply to applicants who do not meet the standard entry requirements for the course, or where there is competition for places.

The university uses five contextual indicators based on data provided in an applicant's course application form; these are listed in the table below:

Indicator	Data Collection – SITS
1. Applicants with experience of being looked after / in care for a period of time. The university aims to make an offer of a place to care-experienced applicants who meets the minimum entry requirements for the course to which they have applied, where this is possible.	Voluntary question on UCAS and on the university's online and paper application forms
2. Applicants whose parents or guardians have not previously attended university	Voluntary question on UCAS and on the university's online and paper application forms
3. Applicants who have participated in outreach activity or access programmes	Voluntary question on UCAS and on the university's online and paper application forms.
4. Applicants from schools with lower than average progression to HE (Schools for Higher Education Programme SHEP)	Schools data is held in SITS against the application record. The SHEP schools will be identified as schools with lower than average progression to HE.
5. Applicants from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation SIMD20 areas	SIMD20 identified from the applicant's post code

The university's published entry requirements are set at the minimum level required in order to succeed on the programme. Applicants flagged as contextualised who do not meet or are not predicted to meet these minimum entry requirements will still be considered for example through interview or other assessment method. It is important to establish the best option for the applicant to ensure they have the motivation, ability and necessary skills to succeed on the programme and if necessary, they may be offered an alternative access route.

### 8.3. Curriculum for Excellence

The university welcomes Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland and fully supports its aims to ensure that all children and young people develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future. The university recognises that, through Curriculum for Excellence, the ability to succeed may be demonstrated in a variety of ways and will consider this in applying its entry criteria to applicants.

## 8.4. Admission and selection

### 8.4.1. Application process

Applications to full-time undergraduate degree programmes and all applications by school leavers should be made through UCAS (the University and College Application System). Applications for other programmes should be made using the university's online application form from the relevant course page on our website (paper copies and other formats are available on request). Applicants are encouraged to provide as much information as possible to assist in decision-making, including the timely submission of required evidence of qualifications and other supporting documentation.

Admissions decisions will be made as quickly as possible. In cases where selection interviews, auditions or portfolio reviews are required it may take longer for decisions to be reached. For some programmes, especially those with large volumes of applicants, applications from suitably qualified candidates may be held to a cut-off date to ensure equal consideration. Applicants are advised of the process and timescale of decisions on acknowledgement of application and through information provided on the university [website](#).

Equal consideration will be given to all undergraduate applications received by the UCAS 'on-time' application deadline of 15 January in each year.

A record of the application including all evidence supporting a decision to admit or reject a student will be retained and kept securely by the university, in accordance with the university's student records retention policy.

### 8.4.2. Interviews, portfolios and auditions

Some programmes involve a selection interview, audition or portfolio review as part of the decision-making process. A selection interview may also be required where entry qualifications were obtained more than six years previously. Where a selection interview, audition or portfolio review is required, the assessment criteria, required standards and assessment methodology will be clearly communicated to applicants in advance and support in undertaking the assessment will be available to students who may have additional support needs.

For any programme, applicants may be invited to attend one of the university's locations, or to a telephone or online meeting to learn more about the university, the programme, the intended location of study, and the study experience. Such meetings will not be part of the selection process but may include important information and guidance, which may influence the applicant's choice of programme, location and mode of study and applicants are encouraged to take part in such meetings.

Some courses, particularly those associated with health, education, sport and other regulated professions, may require applicants to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme through Disclosure Scotland in order to undertake the programme of study. Occasionally other



criteria may need to be considered, such as the requirements of professional bodies, for example, applicants for our nursing programmes must pass an occupational health assessment, which assesses their ability to complete the programme.

#### 8.4.3. Offers

Minimum entry requirements including level of qualification, subject and grade are published for each programme of study. Offers to individual applicants are made on the basis of these minimum criteria, but may include higher or further requirements, depending on a variety of factors including the level of competition for the programme. Where the applicant's credentials are not in English, the applicant must provide notarised translations so that the necessary equivalency checks can be made.

### 8.5. Recognition of prior learning

The university supports the principle of recognising prior learning wherever it occurs, and encourages prospective students to apply for this. Provided the learning can be assessed, it may be recognised as an alternative to standard entry requirements to enable entry to a programme, and/or for credit awarded towards a qualification.

The university supports the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#), and uses this as a reference point when considering applicants without standard entry requirements, or who may be eligible for direct entry to later years of a programme. The university will consider:

- Certificated learning – formal qualifications from a recognised awarding body may be used for credit transfer, either through partial exemption or for direct entry to later years of a programme.
- Non-certificated learning ie relevant experience, professional qualifications or other forms of learning; evidence will be required, to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

More information is available in the university's [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#).

### 8.6. Access

The university has entered into access agreements with colleges and other institutions whereby specific awards, including higher national certificates and higher national diplomas, will be recognised as qualifications for direct entry to later years of study.

[More information on access is available on the university's website.](#)

### 8.7. Deferred entry

The university accepts deferred entry to the majority of its courses; where this is not possible it is noted in the course information on UCAS course search.

## 8.8. International applicants (non UK/EU)

The University of the Highlands and Islands is a sponsor under the United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Tier 4 points based system.

International students must provide copies of their academic qualifications and, where relevant, evidence of English language competence (to the level stated in the academic regulations). Applicants will be made aware of and, if admitted, must abide by the requirements as stated in the university's [International Student Agreement](#).

## 8.9. General information

### 8.9.1. Course change or cancellation

In situations where any of the university's courses have been subject to significant change, or discontinuation, applicants will be informed at the earliest opportunity. Where possible, applicants will be assisted to find alternative provision.

### 8.9.2. Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

The university is committed to providing feedback, when requested, to any applicant whose application was unsuccessful.

### 8.9.3. Appeals and complaints

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of an application for admission, they should discuss the matter with the relevant programme leader (for degree programmes) or the academic partner applied to (for non-degree programmes). If the matter is not resolved, the applicant may submit an appeal against an admissions decision through the assessment appeals procedure in Section 18.6 of the [Academic Regulations](#)

For other issues, applicants may raise a complaint via the [complaints handling policy](#).

## 9. Legislative Framework

[The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#)

[UK Visa and Immigration policy](#)

## 10. Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Other Resources

Terms and conditions for applicants and students

Admissions privacy notice

## 11. Version Control and Change History

Version	Date	Approved by	Amendment(s)	Author
1	01/09/14	Academic Council	Original document	N/A
2	11/04/18	R Tamsett	Changed to new policy template	N Oakley
3	05/06/18	M Antonson	Review and edit of policy update	R Tamsett
4	11/09/18	M Antonson	Final edit update	R Tamsett
5	91120	Head of Student Services	WHC Logo added	Customer and Student Services Manager