



POLICIES & PROCEDURES

FE (WBL) ADMISSIONS POLICY

Policy Owner:	Director of Curriculum
Date Approved:	2 April 2025
Version:	V1.0
Equality Screening Date:	April 2025
Date of First Issue:	April 2025
Date of Next Review:	April 2027
Location:	Gateway

CONTENTS

1.	Policy Statement	2
2.	Scope	3
3.	Procedure for Implementation	3
4.	Application Process	3
5.	Admission Criteria	4
6.	Waiting List.....	9
7.	Oversubscription	9
8.	Course Cancellation	9
9.	Qualifications on Entry	10
10.	Admissions Feedback and Appeals Procedure.....	11
11.	Quality Assurance	11
12.	Data Protection.....	11
13.	Monitoring and Review.....	11
	Related Documentation	13
	Change Log	13
	Communication.....	13
	Communication Plan	13
	Document Development	13
	Approval Dates	13
	Document History	14

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The South West College, hereafter SWC, recognises the importance of admitting applicants to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. The admissions policy takes account of all aspects of an application and not just an applicant's academic profile. The College is committed to raising student aspirations, widening participation and promoting equal access to programmes of study. SWC encourages progression to further study based on ability or employment.
- 1.2 In seeking to attract applications from learners, SWC is committed to widening participation and to promoting wider access to Further and Higher Education.
- 1.3 Applications for admission to all courses are considered without regard to any inappropriate distinction e.g. age, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, religious or political beliefs, marital status, care experience or socio-economic background.
- 1.4 In most cases, courses will have admissions criteria which outline the minimum prior knowledge, skills and/or academic qualifications the applicant should have in order to meet the demands of the course. Places are offered subject to availability on any course of study.
- 1.5 All full time students and part time students on specified courses may be required to attend a guidance and advice session with a specialist tutor prior to taking up a position on a course. This support process will provide applicants with an opportunity to discuss their choice of course and to ensure that they are satisfied with the requirements of the course.
- 1.6 Additional information, advice and guidance will be available through the Careers Information and Guidance services provided across the Campuses.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy refers mainly to prospective students intending to join full and part time programmes delivered on all campuses and outcentres of SWC.

3. Procedure for Implementation

- 3.1 The College welcomes applications from students aged 16 or over including people with disabilities, socially disadvantaged backgrounds and with non-traditional qualifications. Normally applicants under 16 will not be permitted entry to full time courses at the College. In exceptional circumstances, an applicant who is under 16 may be considered for entry to the College if they have a particular educational need that cannot be met in school and this application will be approved by the Chief Executive. The College provides professional advice and assistance for students who may be facing difficulties with costs related to their study or who may be worried about starting a new course, meeting new people and entering a new environment.

4. Application Process

- 4.1 The College operates an online application process through the College website (www.swc.ac.uk). The College's Online Application Portal will open in December for all full-time courses. The portal for part-time courses with fees typically opens in May.
- 4.2 Applicants must be competent in English and submit a fully legible application on the online application portal, apart from those who are non-English speaking i.e. ESOL. Applicants who are unable to complete an online application may request a printed form from any campus.
- 4.3 All applications must be submitted in a timely fashion before all notified closing dates. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure their online application or paper application form is received by the College. An acknowledgment email will be

sent by the College following receipt of the application form. Late applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances approved by the Head of Department or delegated authority. The last date for late applicants is week 7 of the academic year normally the start of the second week in October.

- 4.4 Repeating qualifications at the same level may impact on Student Finance Support, Transport Support and Learning Support.
- 4.5 Applicants are required to follow the admissions process, which will be available on the College website. Where Individual Pre-Enrolment Advice Sessions or Group Pre-Enrolment Advice Sessions are necessary for course entrance, all applicants will be notified with such information.
- 4.6 Applicants are issued with either an unconditional offer (firm), a conditional offer (provisional) or are referred to Careers Officer for guidance and support. The basis of offers will be made in accordance with the Admissions Criteria. The College will publicly release the admissions criteria for each academic year in advance of the online application portal opening and the release of the College prospectus for that year. The admissions criteria will be available from the College website www.swc.ac.uk.

5. Admission Criteria

- 5.1 The College reserves the right to enhance the entrance criteria for all courses based on demand and required academic standards as specified by the awarding body/validating organisation. The College will notify applicants in writing of changes to admissions requirements prior to the commencement of any programme of study.
- 5.2 EU/EEA and Swiss citizens who make an application must have immigration permission (either through the EU settlement scheme or through another category of the UK'S immigration rules). Applicants who are Non-EU/EEA or Swiss residents must have a valid visa or have immigration permission which permits them to study for the duration of their course. Applicants must abide by the immigration rules as listed in the UKVI guidance notes. All applicants are welcomed on the basis that their communication skills are tested prior to enrolment and that previous

qualifications gained can be equated to a United Kingdom qualification. Changes to UKVI regulations may impact on the ability of the College to accept students after application and, as a result, the College reserves the right to refuse admission to any student who does not comply with the current UKVI regulations. The College promotes appropriate learning pathways to match the ability and progression planning of applicants. Progression planning will include progression from education to employment if the learner has reached the full capacity of their academic achievement.

- 5.3 The College welcomes applications from learners who have a learning difficulty and/or a disability (whether physical and/or mental health). In specific circumstances a learning difficulty or a disability may prevent a learner from enrolling on a specific programme. In such cases the College will provide advice and guidance in finding an alternative programme of study linked to career pathway planning. Where an applicant has additional needs arising out of their learning difficulty and/or disability the College will carry out such assessment(s) as required to assess the applicant's suitability to attend the College and to identify if adjustments are required to enable the applicant to attend. The College will make reasonable adjustments to ensure support for any applicant with a learning difficulty and/or disability to assist them in the admissions and enrolment process and in the progression and completion of their studies. This information will be shared only with such staff as are necessary to support the student on their programme of study. There may be times, however, taking into account the resources of the College, when the nature of a student's ill health or behaviour requires support and adjustments beyond the expertise or capacity that the College can reasonably offer.
- 5.4 The College reserves the right to withdraw an offer, close a course and/or move provision to another campus if there are insufficient numbers of students or lack of sufficient resources to operate the course. In such cases the College will offer careers support and advice to applicants and will assist in finding alternative provision.
- 5.5 The College reserves the right to refuse admission to an applicant who has been previously excluded from the College or partner organisations or who previously attended but failed to make sufficient effort towards successfully completing their

studies. The College has a duty of care to learners and staff and reserves the right not to admit an applicant where there is evidence that they could be a threat or danger to others. Information relating to Criminal Convictions, Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) may have an impact on admission. All applicants must disclose any unspent criminal convictions using the Policy and Procedure for the Declaration and Handling of Criminal History Disclosures which can be found at [Policies, Reports and Strategies | South West College](#). The College reserves the right not to admit an applicant who has any outstanding debts to the College.

- 5.6 Where a student will be working with a range of client groups and/or those who may be categorised as 'vulnerable', a range of checks may be undertaken at the induction stage with the student's consent. These may include Access NI Vetting, Health Declaration, Social Services checks and reference checks in accordance with the College Professional Suitability and Fitness to Practise policy. Should the checks be unsatisfactory, this may result in the student not being able to proceed with their chosen programme of study. Should this situation arise, the College will advise the student on other possible options.
- 5.7 The over-riding consideration in admitting applicants to any course is evidence that the applicant will be able to complete the course satisfactorily. The College reserves the right to refuse entry to an applicant deemed not to have sufficiently demonstrated the competency or attributes required to enter and successfully complete the chosen course of study. Should the College deny entry to a course on this basis, the College will write to the applicant outlining the rationale for the College's decision. The College will offer careers support in such cases and will propose alternative courses that may be more suitable to the applicant.
- 5.8 **Admissions Principles**
 - 5.8.1 All applications will be reviewed on merit and on the information held on the completed online application form. The College reserves the right to review previous records to assess suitability for a course.
 - 5.8.2 For all full time and substantial part time FE, HE and WBL programmes, a pre-entry advice session will be offered, and for a small minority of courses, will be

mandatory. Failure to attend a mandatory pre-entry advice session without reasonable notice may impact on an applicant's place in the recruitment process. The College reserves the right to reallocate priority based on a lack of communication or engagement in the College recruitment process from any applicant.

- 5.8.3 Decisions about eligibility for a course will be made objectively and without discrimination. Staff will not venture outside of the agreed processes for reviewing applicant suitability for a course and in the issuing of any offers.
- 5.8.4 Selection criteria will be signed off by the Curriculum Management Team at the start of each admissions cycle and advertised on the College website and in the prospectus.
- 5.8.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is 'a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning'. In the context of the QCF, the definition of RPL is quite specific and relates to assessment leading to the award of credit. Assessment for RPL is conducted against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit/module and is subject to exactly the same internal and external quality assurance requirements as any other kind of assessment. In such cases, the requirement to meet the stated academic entry requirements may be waived. The College Curriculum team will be required to confirm details of non-standard or professional qualifications and relevant work experience with named referees and other professional bodies, as applicable.
- 5.8.6 Where applicants can directly enrol onto a course, they must apply for the course and pay the required fees either online or by contacting the College. Applicants will only be fully enrolled once both these steps have taken place.
- 5.8.7 The College will adhere to its safeguarding responsibilities when considering the admission of students with criminal convictions. For more information, please access the [Policies, Reports and Strategies | South West College](#).

5.8.8 The College has an obligation to applicants and students to ensure that they do not commence or continue on a programme of study or embark on a career for which they may not be suited, particularly given the considerable time, commitment and possible expense involved in the process of qualification. For more information, please access the Fitness to Practise Policy

5.8.9 All applications will be considered equitably without regard to any inappropriate distinction e.g., S75 characteristics such as age, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, religious or political beliefs, marital status, care experience and/or socio-economic background.

5.8.10 The Head of Curriculum has overall accountability for the Admissions Process.

5.8.11 The Head of Quality and Student Engagement has overall management responsibility for the monitoring and quality control of the Admissions Process.

5.9 **Non-Admission**

5.9.1 The College reserves the right to refuse admission to the following:

- i. An applicant who does not meet the advertised entry criteria for the course they have applied for.
- ii. An applicant who has previously: i. been excluded from the College and/or a partner organisation, ii. attended but failed to make sufficient effort towards successfully completing their studies.
- iii. An applicant who has not attended mandatory, or strongly encouraged pre-entry advice sessions.
- iv. An applicant with outstanding College debts.
- v. An applicant where despite best endeavours, the College is unable to make the adaptations required for them to participate wholly in their studies.
- vi. An applicant who has already attained the level of study equal to or higher than the level for which they are applying without a clear rationale.
- vii. An applicant where there is evidence that they could be a threat or danger to others.
- viii. An applicant with a declared criminal conviction that does not satisfy the requirements of the pre-entry risk assessment.

- ix. An applicant who does not have sufficient level of written English to be able to engage with course materials.
- x. Where an applicant's needs is unable to be met by reasonable adjustments.

6. Waiting List

- 6.1 A waiting list will be available in instances where offers exceed the number of advertised places on a course.

7. Oversubscription

- 7.1 If there are more applicants for a course who meet the entry criteria than there are places available on the course, we reserve the right in this instance to enhance criteria. SWC will review applications post GCSE results day, and if necessary will begin the process for oversubscription that may include the following:
 - Interview Performance
 - Academic Achievements
 - Placement/Employment Status
 - Personal Statement
 - Reference
- 7.2 The college will establish a waiting list based on the ranking against the enhanced criteria. Applicants on the waiting list will be offered a place should it become available based on the ranking above.

8. Course Cancellation

- 8.1 The College reserves the right to cancel courses at any time prior to the enrolment period commencing, and in some instances, cancellation may take place after enrolment has commenced. In all instances of course cancellation, the College will inform applicants as soon as possible and will make every effort to reassign the

applicant to an alternative suitable course. All course cancellations will be approved by the Head of Department prior to any communication being issued to applicants.

9. Qualifications on Entry

- 9.1 The College advertises entry criteria for courses on the website and within the online prospectus and it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they meet the entry criteria prior to enrolment.
- 9.2 Any applicant who has applied for a Level 2 or Level 3 vocational study programme will be enrolled on Essential Skills or GCSE Maths or English as part of their programme of study. Enrolment on Essential Skills or GCSE Maths and English is mandatory, and no student will be enrolled onto a Level 2 or Level 3 full time vocational programme without this. If an applicant declines this at the enrolment stage, their application to the full study programme will be withdrawn and the waiting list will be accessed to offer the next available space to a student.
- 9.3 The College delivers and assesses all qualifications in English, and as such, an appropriate level of English is a prerequisite for all courses, apart from those aimed at non-English speakers i.e., ESOL. Progression from ESOL through to full time L2 and L3 vocational programmes is possible and further information can be gained from the ESOL section of the College prospectus.
- 9.4 If a student has achieved an international qualification and would like it checked for eligibility for entry to a programme of study at the College, they can access the services of NARIC for a 'Statement of Comparability'.
- 9.5 It is the responsibility of the applicant to cover the cost of this.
- 9.6 Further information can be found at <https://www.naric.org.uk/Qualifications/SOC/Default.aspx>

10. Admissions Feedback and Appeals Procedure

- 10.1 The College is committed to fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices, and believes that providing constructive feedback about an unsuccessful application will help an applicant to achieve a successful outcome in the future. The College will therefore provide feedback, when requested, to anyone whose application to study at the College has been unsuccessful.
- 10.2 Following the provision of feedback, an applicant will have the right to appeal the selection decision, providing that there are sufficient grounds for an appeal. The Complaints and Compliments policy outlines how an applicant can access feedback or appeal a selection decision. [Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy V3.1](#)

11. Quality Assurance

- 11.1 Comments and complaints regarding this document will be handled through the College's comments and complaints mechanisms. For more information, please access the Complaints Policy.

12. Data Protection

- 12.1 The implementation of the Admissions Policy will be compliant with the relevant data protection legislation i.e. the Data Protection Act 2018. All information will be treated confidentially and passed to appropriate personnel on a 'need-to-know' basis.

13. Monitoring and Review

- 13.1 The Head of Department, together with the Deputy Head of Department, have responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the Admissions Policy.

- 13.2 The College will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this Policy.
- 13.3 The College will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote this Policy effectively. The College is committed to reviewing this Policy on a bi-annual basis to ensure that it is effective in supporting students and is having a positive impact on student retention.

Signed Principal and Chief Executive: Celine McCarroll

Date: 2 April 2025

Signed Chair of the Governing Body: Nicholas O'Halloran

Date: 2 April 2025

Related Documentation

Title	Location	Owner
Higher Education Admissions Policy	Gateway	Head of Higher Education
Equal Opportunities Policy	Gateway	Head of People & Culture
Fees Policy	Gateway	Head of Finance and Governance
SWC Criminal Convictions Policy	Gateway	Adult Safeguarding Champion
SWC Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy	Gateway	Director of Development and Support
SLDD Interim Policy	Gateway	Head of Quality and Student Engagement

Change Log

Location	Change from deletion/addition	Change to
V1.0	New Policy	

Communication

Who needs to know (for action)	All staff All students
Who needs to be aware	All staff All students

Communication Plan

Action	By Whom	By When
Communicate to all staff	Padraig McNamee	On approval
Upload to Student and Staff Gateway	Nicola Nugent	On approval

Document Development

Details of staff who were involved in the development of this policy:

Name	Role
Padraig McNamee	Director of Curriculum
John Moore	HOD - Health Life and Personal Sciences
John Moss	HOD - Sustainability Construction and Transport
Christopher Robinson	Head of Work Based Learning
Brian McIlduff	Head of Quality and Student Engagement
Sharon Pritchard	Student Engagement and Support Manager

Details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this policy:

Name	Organisation	Date
N/A		

Approval Dates

Approved by	Date
Governing Body	2 April 2025

Document History

Issue no. under review	Date of review:	Persons involved in review	Changes made after review? Yes/No If Yes refer to change log	New Issue No.	If changes made was consultation required?	If changes made was Equality Screening required?