SWC

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

FE (WBL) ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE

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

CONTENTS

1.0   Change History

1.1   Changes to this Procedure are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

2.0   Summary

2.1   SWC recognises an applicant's first contact with the College is often through the applicant recruitment process. Therefore, the College is committed to creating a clear and 'applicant focused' recruitment process, showcasing the College's courses and support services, while also guiding applicants in both their course choices and each step of the application and enrolment process.

2.2   This Procedure aims to bring together the Further Education & Traineeship application and enrolment experience.

2.3   This Procedure takes account of all aspects of assessing an applicant's suitability for a course. SWC acknowledges that the decision to offer an applicant a course place goes beyond purely an assessment of academic suitability for the course. The College has a responsibility to consider any learning support requirements or reasonable adjustments that may need to be put in place to enable the applicant to attend College. In addition, the welfare of all staff and applicants must be considered, through the review of disclosed criminal convictions.

2.4   This Procedure outlines the admission and course cancellation processes which meet the requirements of the Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access Section of the Quality Code; Competition and Markets Authority guidance for Further Education; and Awarding Organisation requirements.

3.0   Scope

3.1   This Procedure will apply to all admissions at SWC. It will outline all aspects of the admissions process and will bring together the application and enrolment process.

3.2   This Procedure also meets Competition and Markets Authority guidance for Higher & Further Education, and Awarding Organisation requirements.

4.0   Procedure for Further Education Admissions

4.1   Course Descriptors
        Course descriptors must detail all entry criteria and costs pertaining to each individual course. Where a course requires a valid Access NI certificate, this information must be included in the course descriptor information.

4.2   Communications and Marketing use this information to promote courses. Courses will not be promoted unless a course descriptor is available online, this avoids confusion and customer inconvenience at enrolment periods.

4.3   Creating and Maintaining Descriptors
4.3.1   The Head of Marketing will liaise with Heads of Department / Deputy Heads to create, approve, upload and maintain online course descriptors. At key times through the year (see Appendix 2) course descriptors will be reviewed and updated and/or new courses will have descriptors created.

4.3.2   The Director of Curriculum will provide final signoff prior to course descriptors being published on the website.

4.4   Quality Monitoring for Descriptors
4.4.1   The Head of Marketing, assisted by the Head of Student Services will monitor the overall quality of course descriptors in relation to:
        •   Presence of course descriptor for all live courses
        •   Completion of all fields in the descriptor
        •   Grammar/spelling

- Match with template
- Readability/appropriate for customer

4.4.2 Where quality issues arise, the Head of Student Services will liaise with Curriculum Support Officers to address these.

4.4.3 A template (Appendix 3) will be kept by the Head of Student Services, which will be subject to annual review to ensure that there is a true reflection of the SWC learning experience.

4.4.4 The Head of Student Services will work with the Heads of School to improve quality where issues arise.

4.5 Use of Descriptors for Customer Queries

4.5.1 Customer facing staff providing course information and guidance will use the course descriptors in the first instance. This will help to manage the number of calls/queries transferred to academic staff and will provide instant information for the applicant.

4.5.2 The Admissions Officers or nominated appointees will provide feedback regarding the content of descriptors and highlight any opportunities for improvement.

4.6 Admissions Criteria

4.6.1 The College reserves the right to enhance the criteria for all courses based on demand and required academic standards as specified by the awarding body.

4.6.2 Applicants are required to upload documentation to provide evidence of the entry criteria being met.

4.7 College Open Days

The College will run a minimum of three open events to showcase College facilities and courses, giving prospective applicants the opportunity to gain an insight into College life.

Application, Pre-Entry Guidance and Communication Process

4.8   Course Wizard

The College website course finder includes a Course Selection box to assist applicants in their course choices. This will guide applicants in their search for courses of the appropriate type, level, location, and mode of study. Applicants who are still unclear about their career choices may submit a request to be contacted by the Careers department at the end of the wizard. Applicants will also be able to request contact from other College Support Services including Learning Support and Student Finance.

4.9   Course Applications

Full time applicants can apply for up to three full time courses, while there is no limit on the number of Part-Time courses that can be applied for on the online application portal.

Following submission of a course application the prospective applicant, from here on known as the applicant, will receive an acknowledgement email.

4.10   Application Process

All Applicants follow a four-step admission process for Further Education:
- o   *Step 1 - Online application*
- o   *Step 2 - Pre-Entry Advice and Guidance*
- o   *Step 3 – Skills Assessment*
- o   *Step 4 – Confirmation of Qualifications on Entry and Enrolment*

Step 1 - Online application

- Complete an online application. All SWC applicants must apply online at www.swc.ac.uk. They can do this independently or on any SWC Campus.
- An automatic acknowledgement email will be sent on receipt of application and advising of next steps.
- If the application flags that an additional assessment is required (this could be a learning support / reasonable adjustment or the disclosure of a criminal conviction) a member of the Learning Support team will be in touch.

4.11   Reasonable Adjustments

4.11.1   The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 ("SENDO") prohibits discrimination against disabled applicants and prospective applicants by schools and institutions of Further and Higher Education. It introduces the duty not to discriminate against disabled people or applicants to Further and Higher Education institutions. It is unlawful for the College to discriminate against a disabled person: in the arrangements it makes for determining admissions or enrolments to SWC; in the terms on which it offers to admit or enrol a person; and by refusal or deliberate omission to accept an application for admission or enrolment.

4.11.2   SENDO legislation also requires that SWC make reasonable adjustments to ensure that any applicant with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is assisted while going through the admissions and enrolment process and in the progression and completion of their studies. The duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory and a reactive duty owed to all disabled people and applicants. However, adjustments cannot be made to the minimum entry criteria/competence standards.

4.11.3   SWC is committed to ensuring that it complies fully with this legislation and that it provides the best possible opportunities for every applicant.

SWC welcomes applications from learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 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.

If an applicant declares that they have a disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition (defined as lasting in excess of 12 months) their needs will be assessed by staff from the learning support unit. An applicant, who has declared a learning support need on their application, may not be issued with a conditional offer or early enrolment until the Learning Support reasonable adjustments assessment has been completed. An offer of enrolment may be rescinded if it is found that the College cannot reasonably meet the needs of an applicant.

The College reserves the right to rescind an offer of admission where an applicant fails to disclose a disability or difficulty which requires support and adjustments beyond the expertise or capacity that the College can reasonably offer.

4.12   Disclosure of Criminal Convictions

4.12.1   SWC is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all applicants, trainees, and staff while they attend the College. SWC is also committed to making sure that there is equality of opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions.

4.12.2   To help the College fulfil its commitments, all applicants must declare whether they hold or have held any convictions at the time of their application. If an applicant discloses a criminal conviction(s), he or she will not automatically be excluded from the application process. The disclosure of a criminal conviction means that the College will apply the Criminal Conviction Disclosure Process. This process allows a senior manager – Deputy Head of Department or above - to consider the disclosure in the context of the occupational area that the applicant has applied to, the nature of the offence and the responsibility for the care of staff and applicants. Where appropriate, a risk assessment and management plan will be completed and agreed with the applicant prior to the offer of a place on a course.

4.12.3   This is a separate and confidential process which is completed in keeping with Data Protection principles. Affected applicants will be advised about the outcome of this process separately and as quickly as possible. Where a current/previous conviction may preclude an applicant from doing a particular course, alternative appropriate courses may be offered. However, if the College becomes aware of an offence that has not been disclosed, it will review the risk and decide if the student must withdraw from the course (if enrolled) or be prevented from enrolling.

If an applicant declares that they have a previous criminal conviction, when completing their on-line application, they will automatically be directed to the Criminal Conviction Disclosure Process. Any queries relating to the Criminal Disclosure Process can be directed to the Student Services Team.

The applicant may be offered a conditional offer or place on the programme

pending the outcome of any risk assessments. However, any such offer may be rescinded once the outcomes are known.

Step 2 - Pre-Entry Advice and Guidance

- In certain circumstances and at the discretion of the course team, applicants will need to attend a pre-advice and guidance session. The format of pre-entry advice and guidance sessions must remain the same for each applicant on a particular course. Where pre-entry advice and guidance sessions are mandatory, applicants will receive an invite via email from the relevant Curriculum Team. This email invite will detail the content of the pre-entry advice and guidance session.

- Pre-entry Advice & Guidance sessions will run between April and June of each academic year. It is advised that sessions should take place every month, however this will be dependent on the number of applications and availability of staff. There may be a follow up session later in the month which can be used for the Skills Assessment e.g. dexterity, performance, portfolio, or written assessment to be completed. The requirements for this assessment will be communicated by the Curriculum Team via email.

- Applicants will have the opportunity to accept or decline their invite. Failure to attend may result in your application being suspended. While invites can be accepted/declined/rescheduled up until the day of the session, applicants are advised to make contact with the College as soon as possible if the allocated time does not suit.

- Applicants who do not attend pre-entry advice and guidance session will be invited to attend the next available session unless they cancel their application for that course. In some instances, the applicant may have received a conditional offer for another course.

- The format of pre-entry advice and guidance sessions must remain the same for each applicant. Course Teams must agree the process by setting standardised criteria. All records of pre-entry advice and guidance sessions must be stored and retained securely.

- In the event that pre-entry advice and guidance sessions are not mandatory, course teams will issue conditional offers based on academic achievement alone.

Step 3 – Skills Assessment

- In certain circumstances and at the discretion of the course team, applicants will need to complete a Skills Assessment.

- The relevant programme team will include the details of this in the invite to interview email. This assessment considers applicant skills beyond academic achievement. Examples of the assessment include an audition, portfolio for art and design, practical task in engineering and feedback in leadership and management. Applicants may also sit a pre-entry test. Full details of assessment methods will be communicated to applicants in advance.

4.13 Outcomes of Pre-Entry Advice & Guidance / Assessment Sessions

4.13.1 Once the subject pre-entry advice and guidance has been completed or the decision has been taken not to hold advice and guidance sessions, the College can then proceed to one of the following:

i. Conditional Offer - the offer of a place on the course if the applicant achieves the course entry requirements and there are places available. In certain circumstances the number of conditional offers issued may be limited to the number of places available on the course.

ii. Enrolment - the applicant already meets the course entry requirements and successfully passes the pre-entry advice and guidance / assessment session.

iii. Further guidance - sessions to follow or not successful. If applicants are unsuccessful, the relevant team will direct and support applicants to a more appropriate course option. The applicant can also be referred to the Careers Team for further advice and guidance.

Step 4 – Confirmation of Qualifications on Entry and Enrolment

4.14 Applicants with a Conditional Offer

4.14.1 Applicants are required to upload/submit documentation to their application account to provide evidence of the entry criteria being met. The Course Co-ordinator/Tutor will check and approve the qualifications on entry.

4.14.2 On results day, applicants with a Conditional Offer must log on remotely and upload their results. The College will be available for this also.

4.14.3   If all entry criteria have been met and confirmed by the Course Co-ordinator/Tutor, the applicant status will be updated to 'Enrolled' and a confirmation email will be sent.

4.14.4   If the qualification documentation does not meet the specific requirements, the applicant will be asked to resubmit their documentation. If entry criteria are not met, the applicant will be advised by the Course Co-ordinator/Tutor by email. The Course Co-ordinator/Tutor will endeavour to direct the applicant to a more appropriate course option or refer them to the Careers Team for further advice and guidance on their next step. The Applicant will be moved to 'Entry Requirements Not Met' (Unsuitable for Course).

4.15   <u>Applicants without a Conditional Offer / New Applicants</u>

4.15.1   Enrolment will take place on all four main campuses.

4.15.2   The enrolment days will be advertised in the local press and prospective students who have not yet applied will be welcome to attend.

4.15.3   Prospective students will be asked to complete an online application or to update their online application with their exam results if they haven't already done so. These later applicants are then directed to the pre-entry advice and guidance area if required for their chosen subject. Applicants will be seen on a 'first come, first served' basis.

4.16   <u>Admission Appeals</u>

4.16.1   Unsuccessful applicants have the right to appeal the decision.

4.16.2   Admissions Appeals will follow the <u>College Complaints Process</u> Complaints received about course admission will be acknowledged within 2 working days, investigated by the Head of School, and responded to within 5 working days via email.

4.16.3   If an applicant is dissatisfied with the College response to their complaint, they have the right to submit a Complaint Appeal in writing to the Principal and Chief Executive.

4.16.4 If the Applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint appeal, they have the right to refer the matter on to the Awarding Organisation and/or the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

4.17   Keeping in Touch Communications

SWC will maintain regular email communication with applicants during each step of the application process. As well as focusing on the actual application and enrolment process, the communications will introduce applicants to the range of Support Services the College offers and highlight 'Good News' stories on the achievements of current applicants.

4.18   Part-time Enrolment

4.18.1 Part-Time applicants who apply for a course that requires an interview will have to attend a pre-entry advice and guidance session. The outcome of this session will either be the offer of a place on the course, or if unsuccessful, direction to another line of study. Their enrolment status will be updated by the tutor to 'application approved' and the applicant will be referred to Customer Services to complete the enrolment process and pay for their course. All Part-Time applicants are required to make payment for their course at the point of enrolment in line with the terms set out in the College Fees Policy.

4.18.2 Part-Time applicants looking to enrol after the Part-Time enrolment evenings, will be contacted by the School to arrange a pre-entry advice and guidance session. Course teams should check their application lists weekly to ensure that all applicants are contacted.

4.18.3 Part-Time applicants who apply for a course that does not require interview should contact the College after they have submitted their application. Customer Services will take their payment and confirm their enrolment. Places are offered on a first come, first served basis therefore it is the responsibility of the applicant to make payment in order to secure their place.

4.19   Enrolment After Results Day

4.19.1 Academic staff will be available on a rota basis for any applicants who wish to enrol between enrolments days and the start of term. Academic staff will follow the

same enrolment processes for each applicant regardless of when they come to enrol.

4.20   Course teams should check their applications daily to ensure that all new applications are attended to in a timely fashion.

4.21   The School Support Officers will receive an alert of any new applications made after enrolment days via email.

4.22   <u>Notification of Course Enrolment</u>
All applicants will receive an email and a text message confirming their start date and time. This will be issued by the Senior Admissions Officer

4.23   <u>Enrolment After Course Commencement</u>
Applicants may still apply post commencement of the Course Start Date. Course teams should continue to check, in conjunction with the alerts, their application lists to ensure that late applications are dealt with appropriately.

5.0   Complaints

If an applicant wishes to lodge a complaint about the admissions process, they should refer to the College's Complaints Process, available at link <u>Complaints and Compliments Policy – SWC</u>

6.0   Responsible Owner

It is the responsibility of Head of Knowledge Management to ensure that this procedure is implemented, adhered to and reviewed.

7.0   Communication Plan

This SOP will be available on the Learning Engine on the Staff Intranet and the SWC website under 'Public Information'.

8.0   Monitoring and Review

The Head of Department, together with the Deputy Head of Department, have responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the Admissions Policy. The College will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this Policy.

The College will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote this Policy effectively. The College is committed to reviewing this Policy on an annual basis to ensure that it is effective in supporting students and is having a positive impact on student retention.

Data Protection

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

Appendix 1: Change Log

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 Nos.
V1	Jan 2025		Procedure Created	

Appendix 2: Further Education Timeline of Events

Title	Event	Timeframe	Responsible Owners
Course Offering Full time	Course offering review	November	Head of Quality, Intelligent Analytics, Heads of Schools, Training programmes Manager
Course Offering Full time	Provision updated and rolled over	November	Data Quality Unit
Course Offering Full time	Course Descriptors updated	November / December	Senior Admissions Officer, Deputy Head of School, School Support Officers
Course Offering Full time	Course Descriptor checking	December/ January	Senior Admissions Officer, supported by Communications & Marketing
Course Offering Full time	provision signed off	January	Data Quality, Heads of School
Course Offering Full time	Prospectus sign off	January	Communications and Marketing, Director of Strategic Planning Quality and Support
Course Offering Full time	Live for applications	January	Live for applications
Course Promotion	School Visits	Oct – April	Communications & Marketing, Careers, Training Organisation
Course Promotion	FE Prospectus Launch	January	Communications & Marketing
Course Promotion	College FT FE & HE Open Day (online applications)	March	Communications & Marketing, Customer Services, Training Organisation
Pre-Entry Advice & Guidance for applicants	Pre-Entry Advice & Guidance Sessions	April – June	Schools
Contact with Applicants	Keeping in Touch Communications	June – August	Senior Admissions Officer
Enrolment	August Enrolment Days	Held on GCSE results day each year	All SWC Staff

Appendix 3: Course Descriptor Template

Title	Event
Event	(main areas of study)
Awarding body	Provision updated and rolled over.
Course code	Insert unique course identifier code.
Campus	List all campus on which course will be delivered.
Status	Full-time / part-time (delete as appropriate)
Short description	This should be a brief description / overview of the course.
Course overview	In this section you must include how the course is delivered i.e. classroom based / placement etc including hours. It must include purpose and objective and highlight where qualifications could lead. It should outline core modules and skills that will be covered for duration.
Course modules	List of modules to be studied during the course.
Ideal if	Should detail who the course is aimed at.
You'll learn	A brief idea of what is taught throughout the course.
You'll love	Gives applicants an idea about what they will particularly enjoy about the course.
You'll progress	Sets out clear progression pathways.
You'll need	Sets out the minimum entry criteria needed for the course.
Minimum number to run course	State minimum number of applicants to be enrolled for course to run.