



## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

---

### **Higher Education Admissions, Admission Appeals and RPL Policy**

---

<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Head of Quality & Student Engagement
<b>Date Approved:</b>	2 April 2025
<b>Version:</b>	4.0
<b>Equality Screening Date:</b>	20 May 2024
<b>Date of First Issue:</b>	9 September 2019
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	June 2027
<b>Location:</b>	Gateway

## CONTENTS

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Aim of the Policy .....	2
3. Scope of the Policy .....	2
4. Definitions and Terminology .....	3
5. Roles and Responsibilities .....	4
6. Higher Education Admissions Policy .....	6
7. Recruitment Activities .....	7
8. Enquiries, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for Applicants .....	8
9. The Application Process .....	9
10. Recognition of Prior Learning - APCL and APEL .....	15
11. Document Verification and Fraud .....	16
12. Mature and Young Applications .....	18
13. Care Leavers .....	18
14. Applicants with Disabilities or Specific Learning Needs .....	18
15. International Students .....	20
16. Applicants making a Criminal History Disclosure .....	21
17. Changes to and Discontinuation of Programmes .....	22
18. Appeals and Complaints .....	23
19. Monitoring and Review .....	23
Appendix 1 General Information Regarding the Application of APEL .....	25
Appendix 2 - South West College Procedure for Admissions Feedback (Unsuccessful Admissions) .....	43
Related Documentation .....	48
Change Log .....	48
Communication .....	48
Communication Plan .....	49
Document Development .....	49
Approval Dates .....	49
Document History .....	50

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy supports South West College's (SWC) Development Plan by detailing the processes relating to the successful recruitment, selection and admission of students onto Higher Education (HE) programmes.

## 2. Aim of the Policy

- 2.1. South West College aims to ensure that all applications for HE courses are underpinned by the principles of fair admissions otherwise known as the Schwartz Principles (2004) and is aligned to the core practices of the UK Quality Code under Expectations for Standards and Expectations for Quality. For further information visit <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

## 3. Scope of the Policy

- 3.1. This policy sets out the principles and practices of the recruitment, selection and admissions policy that applies to all applications for prescribed HE (DfE funded) courses received by the College. This includes the following awards at Level 4, 5, 6 and 7, HNC, HND, Foundation Degrees, Bachelor's degrees, Professional Graduate Certificates and Diplomas. Students on such courses may be attending full time, part time or by Higher Level Apprenticeship delivery.
- 3.2. For the purpose of this document, recruitment, selection and admission includes:
- i) Recruitment activities to help prospective students make informed decisions about whether they wish to undertake study within HE and, if so, where, how and what they might wish to study.
  - ii) Procedures employed by South West College to select suitably qualified prospective students for particular programmes.
  - iii) South West College's decision-making processes and subsequent communication with both successful and unsuccessful prospective students.
  - iv) How South West College will support those who receive and accept offers of a place to make the transition from prospective student to current student.

- 3.3. Linked to the Admissions Service, but not within the scope of this policy, is the College Information, Advice and Guidance Policy.

## 4. Definitions and Terminology

- 4.1. Admissions: The team responsible for receipt and processing of all College course enquiries and applications, and management of student enrolment. The Admissions team undertake initial screening exercises for programmes but all decision-making sits within the academic teams. The Admissions team sit within the Student Services department of the College.
- 4.2. The Education Business System (EBS): is the College-wide Management Information System containing details of existing and potential learners through this system. The admissions team records, tracks and processes learners, applications, and enrolments. The College CRM system is used to manage all online enquiries.
- 4.3. International student: A student who requires a Tier 4 (student) Visa to study in the UK. Such students may or may not be living overseas at the time of making their course application.
- 4.4. UKCISA: The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) provides advice and guidance regarding the fee assessment of all students as to home/overseas fee status.
- 4.5. UCAS: The University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), through whom a small number of applications for full-time undergraduate prescribed HE courses must be made and processed e.g. UU BSc (Hons) Social Work and QUB BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies. International students who do not apply through the UCAS main scheme will be registered with UCAS through the Record of Prior Acceptance process.
- 4.6. UKENIC: Organisation which provides comparisons of international qualifications to the British education system and awards.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. South West College's HE courses are validated by various Higher Education Institutions and Awarding Organisations, however, South West College is solely responsible for recruitment, selection and admission for all its HE provision.

5.2. Admissions are responsible for:

- Acting as first point of contact for all course enquiries, applications, and enrolments.
- Providing a personalised initial information, advice, and guidance (IAG) service to all applicants from initial enquiry through to enrolment.
- Receiving all applications and recording these on EBS.
- Acknowledging receipt of all applications and arranging interviews and assessments as appropriate.
- Notifying the Student Support Services when an applicant declares a special learning need and/or disability and liaising with the service regarding the provision of support and reasonable adjustments to the application process.
- Notifying the student support services and, where appropriate, the curriculum teams, when an applicant has declared a criminal conviction. The resulting action will vary depending on the course programme.
- Monitoring the return of interview outcomes and informing Heads of Department/Deputy Heads of Department/Course Director of any outstanding applications or outcomes prior to the deadline dates.
- Notifying applicants of the outcome of all interviews and sending offers, as specified by the curriculum team, or discussing alternative courses as appropriate.
- Ensuring that all offer letters comply with CMA guidance by containing the full set of information required to allow applicants to make an informed decision regarding acceptance of the offer made to them.
- Contacting applicants who fail to attend their interview and rebooking the applicant as appropriate.
- Inviting applicants to programme taster days/keeping warm activities.
- Managing enrolments for all student year groups and notifying students of the enrolment date, location and any relevant documentation required at

enrolment (certificates, passport etc).

- Notifying students of any course fees, as detailed in the portfolio and the Tuition Fee and Other Charges Policy, and how and when payment should be made.
- Fee assessing each applicant to determine eligibility for Home Fee status.
- Keeping up to date with UCAS policy and processes and disseminate information to curriculum teams as required.
- Supporting recruitment activities in liaison with curriculum staff e.g. information evening.

### 5.3. Student Services are responsible for:

- Providing appropriate IAG to prospective students, including enquiries and applicants, seeking information about financial support.
- Assisting prospective students in making funding applications to Student Finance NI or other relevant agencies.

### 5.4. The Learning Support Service sits within the Student Engagement and Support Team and is responsible for:

- Contacting applicants by telephone to discuss their declaration of a specific learning need or disability on the course application form.
- Working with the curriculum teams to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made before interviewing to accommodate those who have declared a learning difficulty or disability.
- Ensuring that the College explores reasonable adjustments to accommodate additional needs thus enabling the student to access the curriculum and, where this is not possible, to liaise with the curriculum team so that they can contact the applicant with the outcome.

### 5.5. The Marketing Team is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the College is meeting its obligations under Consumer Protection Law and is compliant with the guidance published by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).
- Quality checking and publication of pre-application course and institution promotional information.
- The Marketing team incorporates the Schools Liaison team.

## 6. Higher Education Admissions Policy

- 6.1. South West College is committed to delivering a recruitment, selection and admissions process that has the learner at its heart. It aims to deliver a consistent and transparent service. Prospective students, applicants and current students alike can expect to receive a high quality experience.
- 6.2. SWC will select applicants on the basis of their individual suitability for the programme they have applied to. Applicants are required to demonstrate that they meet the minimum general entry requirements and academic requirements as specified in the published course information. Entry requirements will vary by programme and may be stipulated by the validating/awarding body, an external accrediting body or Course Director. Individual programmes may also feature non-academic entry requirements, which will be publicised alongside the academic entry requirements. Applicant merit and potential may be assessed by the following:
  - i) Personal statement.
  - ii) A reference from an educator or employer.
  - iii) Academic certificates.
  - iv) Employment history.
  - v) Portfolio of work relevant to the programme applied to.
  - vi) Audition for performance programmes.
  - vii) Interview with the curriculum team.
  - viii) Literacy and/or numeracy assessment.
- 6.3. The timing and methods for such assessment are specified in the published course information and confirmed in communications from the Admissions team.
- 6.4. Applicants who demonstrate on their application form that they meet the minimum entry requirements, as confirmed by the curriculum teams, may be invited to attend an interview, which may incorporate testing, audition and/or portfolio review. Timescales for arranging interviews will vary between programmes. Curriculum teams are responsible for offer making. All students will receive a conditional offer after attending interview and satisfying the College admission criteria e.g. by presenting required GCSE results or equivalent and qualifications at level 3 such as A Levels, BTEC or equivalent. These offers are subject to the students satisfying

the college or validating body's general entry requirements and meeting the minimum UCAS admission tariff. Admissions tutors may enhance the admissions criteria where there is high demand for places.

- 6.5. South West College is committed to handling admissions appeals and complaints professionally, within the given framework specified in this policy.

## **7. Recruitment Activities**

- 7.1. South West College hosts annually, an event at each of the main campuses in each academic year. The open events take place in the evening or on Saturdays in order to allow prospective students to attend without missing school, college or work. The events take place at key points throughout the year including throughout the autumn, early spring, and summer term. Prospective students are encouraged to register their interest in the event online and are welcome to bring friends and family members with them.
- 7.2. The open events provide prospective students with an opportunity to view the College campuses and the available facilities. Curriculum staff are available to provide detailed information about individual course content, structure and entry requirements. Support services will also be available to provide relevant pre-application information, advice and guidance (IAG). The services are the Admissions team, the Learning Support Services, the Student Services team and the Learning Resources Centres.
- 7.3. The Marketing team, in collaboration with curriculum teams, attend external recruitment events. The purpose of attendance at these events is to make South West College services available to those who are unable to attend, or are unaware of, the open events. Prospective students will be given information regarding the College and its course provision, which will allow them to decide whether to further investigate making an application.
- 7.4. The College's Schools Liaison team maintain the relationships between South West College and the schools sector, including sixth form colleges. The team attend



schools' HE and Careers events, supported by the Admissions team. IAG at such events focuses on making prospective students aware of the College's course provision and the course entry requirements.

- 7.5. Prospective learners may choose to leave their contact details with College representatives. The Admissions team will contact these individuals by telephone or email to offer further information and advice.

## **8. Enquiries, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for Applicants**

- 8.1. South West College is committed to providing high-quality IAG to applicants, parents and advisors on all aspects of recruitment, selection and admission.
- 8.2. Contact details for prospective student and applicants' enquiries are advertised on the College website, the prospectus, all published hard copy marketing materials and advertisements, and on social media sites.
- 8.3. Prospective students making direct contact with South West College for the first time are directed to the Admissions team. Enquiries are received by the team by a variety of means:
  - Face to face: there is a drop-in service at our Campuses in Cookstown, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh.
  - Telephone: the information and admissions lines are advertised on all marketing materials and are answered by the admissions team throughout the working day, including the evenings. A voicemail facility is available and callers leaving voicemails can expect a response the next working day.
  - Email: the Admissions team respond to emails within one working day of their receipt.
  - Social Media: enquiries made via social media are managed by the Marketing team, who respond within one working day.
- 8.4. Course entry requirements are published on the College website, in the prospectus and on the UCAS Search Tool for Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University validated programmes. Entry requirements are reviewed annually and updated at

the request of the Curriculum teams, prior to the opening of the relevant admissions cycle. Prospective students and applicants wishing to seek further guidance regarding entry requirements are advised to contact the Admissions team. Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA) compliance is ensured by the Marketing team.

- 8.5. Maintaining the website and prospectus is the responsibility of the Marketing team. Requests for information to be provided in alternative formats, such as large print or braille, are forwarded to the Marketing team, who will arrange for the provision of the requested of the format.
- 8.6. The course profiles featured in the UCAS Search Tool are maintained by the Admissions team. Key Information Statistics (KIS) data is maintained by the Management Information Services department (MIS) that is part of the Services Department that the Admissions team also sits within.
- 8.7. In some cases, it may be necessary to make changes to course profiles after the publication and distribution of printed materials. The Marketing team ensure that necessary changes are made to the website and the Admissions team communicate the change to affected applicants.

## 9. The Application Process

- 9.1. Application routes for HE programmes at South West College vary depending on the programmes.
  - All Full time and Part time HE programmes must be made directly to the College except for the Queens Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies, and the Ulster University BSc in Social Work which must be applied for through UCAS.
  - All Open University validated programmes Full- time and Part-time are direct application to the College.
- 9.2. The Admissions team provide IAG on the application process and the assessment methods used in determining eligibility for an offer. Receipt of an application

triggers production of an acknowledgement letter containing further information and next steps. This is sent within one working day of receipt of the application.

Admissions are the main point of contact throughout the application process.

- 9.3. All applicants are logged on the College's Management Information System, EBS, which is used to track applicant history and progress from initial enquiry through to enrolment. All letters sent to the applicants can be tracked through this system and reproduced if required. Applicant data is logged and managed in the same way regardless of the course applied for. Paper-based application files are produced for use by the interviewing course team.
- 9.4. Working in accordance with UKCISA guidance, Admissions identify the need to fee assess applicants' eligibility for Home fee status. Students who are assessed as non-home fee payers are informed via a standard letter from Admissions and a separate file is created to record evidence of the assessment, details of any offer and payments, as well as any other communications.
- 9.5. Where an individual has made multiple applications, they will receive equal consideration for each course. Applicants are permitted to apply for the same course in multiple years, however, courses that adhere to external professional standards, such as Social Work and Teaching, may choose to limit the number of times an individual may apply. This is made clear in the pre-application information on the College website, where applicable.
- 9.6. Entry requirements - Individuals applying for any HE course at South West College must meet the entry requirements and may be required to attend an interview. Course-specific entry requirements can be found on the course search of the College website and in the HE prospectus.
- 9.7. International applications must meet the standard entry requirements. The Admissions team produce a UK ENIC comparison to determine whether the applicant holds the relevant equivalent qualifications. Please see section 15 for further details of the admission of International applicants.
- 9.8. Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning may be considered for entry to

programmes. See section 10 for further details regarding Recognition of Prior Learning.

#### 9.9. Interviews and Auditions

- i) On occasion, applicants may be invited to attend an interview/audition with a member of the curriculum team. Applicants are made aware of their interview/audition date and process by a letter sent by the Admissions team. It is the intention of the College to provide two weeks' notice of the interview appointment. In cases where this is not possible, applicants will receive a telephone call, subsequently confirmed by email.
- ii) Interviews are conducted by representatives of the curriculum team who teach the course the applicant has applied for. The interview follows the set structure for the programme and is conducted by someone who is able to discuss the course in detail. The interviewer ensures that the interview is conducted in an appropriate environment and that the applicant is given the opportunity to speak confidentially.
- iii) All interviews are conducted in line with the College Equal Opportunities Policies. Applicants seeking reasonable adjustments to their interview/audition are invited to contact the Admissions team upon receipt of their interview/audition letter. The Admissions team will communicate the adjustment request to the interviewing tutor, who will liaise with the applicant and Learning Support regarding their needs. To allow sufficient time to make arrangements, the applicant's request must be referred to Learning Support at least two weeks in advance of their interview.
- iv) The curriculum teams are open to conducting interviews via Skype, or similar video conferencing, when travel to an interview is impractical for the applicant, e.g. the applicant lives outside the UK. Auditions can be recorded and uploaded to the internet and portfolios can also be viewed online if required.
- v) The College reserves the right to insist on interview attendance for courses that must adhere to outside regulatory bodies and professional standards. This includes for the BA (Hons) Social Work. However, every effort will be made to ensure that all stages of the interview process are conducted on the same day for those for whom multiple journeys are impractical.

#### 9.10. Programmes that require disclosure of criminal convictions request that the

applicant complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The relevant programmes will do this in one of two ways:

- i) Applicants applying for programmes that require a mandatory external work placement with vulnerable people, such as Early Years, are required to undertake an Access NI check.
- ii) Applicants applying for a programme where the work placement with vulnerable people is arranged by South West College, are asked to complete and pay for the Access NI check as part of their enrolment/induction process. Applicants are made aware that continuation on their programme of study is subject to the return of a satisfactory Access NI check. To ward against withdrawing students post-enrolment, applicants are asked to complete a self-declaration as part of the interview process. The purpose of this is to allow any issues arising to be explored before an offer is made. Applicants are made aware of the need to complete and pay for an Access NI check in the pre-application information on the College website, in their interview invitation and in their offer letter.

#### 9.11. Decision-making and Offers

- i) Applicants who do not meet the minimum entry requirements are offered an interview for an appropriate alternative, where such an alternative exists. This will not necessarily be a HE course.
- ii) It is not policy to routinely give reasons for rejections. However, any applicant seeking rejection reasons or interview feedback should contact the Admissions office. Applicants can expect to receive an initial response to their feedback request within two working days of that request being received. Where additional information must be sought from the relevant curriculum team, the timescale extends to ten working days from receipt of the request. Feedback requests from third parties are not accepted. Applicants are welcome to speak to an Admissions Officer for advice and guidance regarding the qualifications and experience that will lead to a successful course application in the future.
- iii) Interview outcomes are decided by the interviewing curriculum team. Applicants can expect to receive communication of the decision within five working days of completion of the full interview process. The exception to this is courses where it is necessary to convene a review panel to confirm

application decisions. This currently applies only to BA (Hons) Social Work. Applicants are given an expected decision date by the curriculum team at the conclusion of the interview process.

- iv) All application outcomes are communicated to the applicant in a letter sent by the Admissions office. Applicants who have applied through UCAS, can also see their offer or rejection on UCAS Track. Offer letters list each condition (if applicable) of the offer and state by when the conditions must be met. Applicants who do not understand the conditions of their offer should contact the Admissions team for clarification.
- v) Offers are made in line with published entry requirements. However, the College may issue a non-standard offer to learners who do not meet the standard entry requirements but are able to evidence their eligibility for the programme through other means, such as work experience.
- vi) Offered applicants enter into a contract with the College at the point of accepting their offer. Applicants are invited to read the College's Terms and Conditions, which are contained in a PDF file on the College website, before accepting their offer. Applicants who have applied through UCAS are required to accept or decline online via UCAS Track. Applicants who have applied directly to the College are asked to email the Admissions team with their reply. In both cases the offer and applicant decision is recorded on the College's Management Information System. Applicants are advised that by accepting an offer, they are agreeing to the Terms and Conditions.
- vii) Applicants who accept their offer have the standard 14 days cooling off period, during which time they can terminate their contract either by changing their decision on UCAS or contacting the Admissions office.

9.12. South West College applicants are required to submit evidence that conditions have been met to the Admissions office by the deadline given in the offer letter. Scans and emails of qualifications are accepted by the Admissions team, but the original certificates/results slips must be presented to the curriculum staff at enrolment.

9.13. Successful applicants receive a letter from the Admissions team, inviting them to enrol at the main campus before the start of classes. The purpose of the enrolment session is to allow the curriculum teams to check that all offer conditions have been met and to process the necessary data and fees required to fully register the learner

on their programme. The session also provides the learners with the opportunity to ask the curriculum teams any final questions before enrolling and completing their registration on the programme.

- 9.14. Where applicants have not met their offer conditions, the Admissions team do not automatically process a Confirmation Rejection. Instead, the applicant's information is referred to the curriculum team for further guidance. It may be necessary to contact the applicant to obtain contextual information or ascertain if admission on to the programme can be granted by an alternative means.
- 9.15. Unsuccessful applicants can receive feedback regarding the decision-making process see Appendix 2.
- 9.16. South West College's ability to make Confirmation decisions is dependent on applicants demonstrating that they have met their offer conditions by the deadline specified in their offer letter. Applicants who cannot demonstrate that they have met their offer conditions due to an unforeseen delay, or the loss of a document, should contact the Admissions team. The Admissions team will contact the relevant curriculum team to obtain further guidance regarding the applicant's next steps.
- 9.17. Applicants who have applied to South West College directly, do not receive confirmation decisions prior to their enrolment appointment. Applicants who are concerned that they cannot meet their conditions should contact the Admissions team for further guidance.
- 9.18. Information regarding programme start dates, inductions and timetables is provided in the applicant's enrolment invitation letter. When this information is not available at the time of sending the letter, it will be provided to new students at the enrolment session. Induction packs, the Student Handbook, the Programme Handbook and Academic Regulations and reading lists can be accessed on the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), called Canvas.

## 10. Recognition of Prior Learning - APCL and APEL

- 10.1. Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) will not be accepted as a means of meeting entry requirements or achieving advanced standing. This is because Experiential Learning is difficult to quantify.
- 10.2. Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) for qualifications and/or HE credits that have been achieved within the previous five academic years may be accepted for advanced standing. Applicants must provide full certificates and transcripts for consideration by the relevant Course Director, the HE Development Coordinator, and the Head of Higher Education. The applicant will be notified of the outcome of their application for advanced standing by letter or e-mail sent by the relevant course director once approved by the Head of Higher Education.
- 10.3. Applications for advanced standing on HE programmes via APCL will only be considered from applicants who have secured a place on an HE programme at South West College. All applicants must meet the entry requirements for individual programmes before an APCL request will be considered.
- 10.4. The most common form of advanced standing at South West College is internal progression from an HNC to an HND top-up or from a Foundation Degree to a Bachelor Degree top-up. The College welcomes applications from students from alternative institutions wishing to apply for advanced standing or top-up programmes.
- 10.5. Limitation to the Award of Credit  
The maximum amount of credit that can normally be claimed for Undergraduate Programmes is equivalent to 2 years full-time study (240 credit points) at Level 1 and 2. Subject to programme regulations credit may be awarded for experiential learning up to a maximum of 120 credits points on an undergraduate degree programme or up to 1/3 of the total credit required for an undergraduate certificate or diploma.
- 10.6. Instances where RPL Credit cannot be awarded.  
Under College regulations, Recognition for Prior Learning (certified, experiential or



uncertified) is not permitted at level 6 of a Bachelor Degree or for the thesis/dissertation module where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award. Recognition of Prior Learning (certified, experiential, or uncertified) is not permitted for the thesis dissertation module on a Post Graduate programme.

#### 10.7. The Assessment Decision

A RPL report will be written by the relevant RPL subject tutor and will be based on whether:

- The level and volume of learning achieved is sufficient for RPL;
- The evidence is sufficient;
- The level and volume of learning achieved is appropriate.

10.8. RPL assessment decision regarding the award of credit will be verified by the relevant course committee and reported to the Board.

#### 10.9. Appeals

There is no right for RPL appeals except on the grounds of procedural irregularity. All RPL appeals should be made in accordance with the College's Higher Education Admission Policy.

### 11. Document Verification and Fraud

11.1. Applicants should be aware that UCAS routinely screen applications for false, misleading and/or missing information, and personal statements for patterns of similarity. UCAS's Fraud and Similarity Detection service will notify both the applicant and the College if an application is found to contain evidence of fraud or plagiarism. UCAS's aim in completing this exercise is to "avoid anyone gaining from an unfair advantage and securing a place by deception".

11.2. Notifications from UCAS's Fraud and Similarity Detection service will be forwarded by the Admissions team to the relevant curriculum area, alongside the rest of the application form and related documents. Where a personal statement has been flagged for containing similar sentences to other personal statements, the

curriculum team will take this into consideration when assessing the application. Applicants should be aware that significant evidence of fraud or plagiarism will result in the application being rejected.

- 11.3. All applicants, regardless of whether they applied through UCAS or directly to the College, are asked to produce their original qualification certificates and transcripts at their selection interview/assessment/audition. Applicants who cannot provide original documents during the selection process will have production of the required documents stipulated as a condition of their offer. Any applicant who does not produce the documents by the enrolment date given will not be permitted to enrol on the programme.
- 11.4. All international qualifications will be checked for academic comparability using the online UK ENIC qualifications database. The Admissions team has access to UK ENIC training materials and guidance on the evaluation and verification of international qualifications. If it is suspected that the qualification is not genuine, and it is not possible to verify the qualification by other means, the College may choose to engage the services of UK ENIC's counter fraud check.
- 11.5. Applicants who supply false qualification documents, whether UK or international, will have their application rejected.
- 11.6. References submitted in support of the course application should be provided on the UCAS application form or sent directly to the Admissions office on official letter-headed paper or from an official email address. References that are not provided in the required format will not be accepted. If either the curriculum team or the Admissions office feels that a reference may not be genuine, the College will verify the reference by contacting the referee using the contact details provided. Should it emerge that the reference has been falsified, the application will be rejected.
- 11.7. Where an application is deemed to be fraudulent, the College reserves the right to pass information to interested parties which may include, but is not restricted to; UCAS, the Student Loan Company, the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) and UKVI.

- 11.8. Applicants who wish to appeal the decision to cancel an application on the basis of fraud, may do so through the Admissions Appeals and Complaints process. For more information, please refer to Appendix 2.

## **12. Mature and Young Applications**

- 12.1. South West College welcomes applicants from of all ages and makes no distinction between 'standard age' and 'mature' applicants when assessing applications.
- 12.2. Courses that require work placements with young and/or vulnerable people, restrict the minimum age at the point of entry to 18 years old. These courses are Social Work, Early Years, Counselling, Health and Social Care, Teacher Training and Education and Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools.
- 12.3. All other courses will assess learners under the age of 18 at the point of entry on a case-by-case basis.
- 12.4. This is no upper age limit on applicants. However, applicants wishing to undertake one of the courses listed in 9.2 will be asked to consider whether their health places any restrictions on their ability to complete the mandatory placements.

## **13. Care Leavers**

- 13.1. South West College is committed to supporting students who are care leavers. Such students can access financial and pastoral support through the Student Services team and should contact the HE Student Development Workers within the team for further help and advice.

## **14. Applicants with Disabilities or Specific Learning Needs**

- 14.1. South West College is committed to welcoming applications from prospective

students with disabilities or specific learning needs. All applicants are given equal consideration based on their academic merit and potential.

- 14.2. Information about disabilities and specific learning needs is collected both on the UCAS application and the direct College application. This information is used to assist in identifying support needs but does not contribute to the academic decision over whether to make the applicant an offer.
- 14.3. Learning Support work with the relevant curriculum team to establish the demands of the programme and consider the applicant's support needs in light of the programme content.
- 14.4. Applicants declaring a disability or specific learning need can expect a response from Learning Support within 15 working days. Depending on the nature of the declaration, applicants will be contacted either by post or telephone in the first instance. A meeting with a member of the Learning Support team will be scheduled if the initial contact reveals that one is required. Such instances may include, where an applicant has multiple disabilities or difficulties, where an applicant requires further assessment of their needs, or where the applicant may need to apply for Disability Student Support Grant via Student Finance NI.
- 14.5. Any applicant or student requesting special arrangements relating to exams or assessments must engage Learning Support for assessment of their eligibility for such arrangements.
- 14.6. Applicants may request special arrangements for their application interview and assessment. Reasonable adjustments will be made on an individual basis and may vary according to the chosen programme of study. It may not be reasonable to accommodate all requests for special arrangements, particularly if such an arrangement would mask or skew the curriculum team's ability to assess the applicant's academic potential. In addition to this, in the case of a course where a mandatory work placement is required, it is the responsibility of the curriculum team to determine whether applicants can complete training for their desired career, in light of the fact that not all types of support are available in the workplace. This may mean that it is inappropriate to provide certain types of support to applicants during

the student selection stage.

- 14.7. The College will only enrol applicants where it has been determined that reasonable adjustments can be made to ensure that adequate support is in place.
- 14.8. The Head of Higher Education will review the practice of the Learning Support Service with the Student Engagement Manager on an annual basis.

## 15. International Students

- 15.1. An international student is defined as a student who requires a Tier 4 (student) visa to study in the UK. Such applicants may or may not be living overseas at the time of making their course application. International applicants should apply via the usual route for full-time undergraduates, i.e., through the UCAS applications process. However, UCAS policy does allow for international students to make applications directly to the College. This is done via the College's normal application form and may be sent directly to Admissions Services or to the International Office. All international recruitment and admission practices must be fully compliant with UK Visas and Immigration Tier 4 Policy.
- 15.2. International applicants who apply directly to South West College are processed in accordance with Section 9.
- 15.3. International applicants who apply through an Educational Agency will be processed in accordance with Section 9 but will receive communications from the College via their agent. It is the responsibility of the College's international office to liaise with international educational agencies.
- 15.4. International applicant offers are subject to conditions which are specific to their status as Tier 4 migrants. Such conditions include the need to provide a Secure English Language Test (SELT) at the required minimum standard and provide evidence of being able to meet the financial requirements of applying for a Tier 4 visa. Details of offer conditions are specified in the offer letter, alongside a link to further information at the UK Government website.

- 15.5. A Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) statement is not issued until the applicant has met all offer conditions, both academic and non-academic.
- 15.6. Details of all fees and methods of payments are provided in the offer letter. No payment is accepted until all offer conditions have been met.

## **16. Applicants making a Criminal History Disclosure**

- 16.1. South West College actively promotes equality of opportunity for all and welcomes applications from a wide range of applicants, including those with a criminal record. Having a criminal record will not prevent an applicant from being considered by the College nor will the information disclosed necessarily prevent a person from studying the course of their choice. However, depending on the course, there may be occasions whereby a spent or unspent conviction may preclude an applicant from being admitted and enrolling on that course. In such cases, the College will discuss this with the applicant and will endeavour to offer alternatives where the conviction might not necessarily be an issue.
- 16.2. Failure to disclose, and subsequent discovery of a conviction, will be treated seriously by the College and may result in a student being withdrawn from their course. See the College policy and procedure for the declaration and handling of criminal history disclosures.
- 16.3. The UCAS application form and the College application form both ask applicants if they have any criminal convictions. The details of applicants who disclose a criminal conviction are referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will assess the nature and severity of the conviction in accordance with the College's Policy and Procedure for the Declaration and Handling of Criminal History Disclosures.
- 16.4. Where it is established that the applicant poses an unacceptable risk, their application will be withdrawn.
- 16.5. All applicants should note that failure to declare information about a conviction or pending court case or supplying untrue or inaccurate information about a conviction

or pending court case may lead to an offer of a place or enrolment on the course to be withdrawn at any time.

- 16.6. If an individual is unsure if their conviction is spent and should be declared, South West College advises applicants to seek advice from e.g. NIACRO (contact details are available on their website [www.niacro.co.uk/contact-details](http://www.niacro.co.uk/contact-details)).

## **17. Changes to and Discontinuation of Programmes**

- 17.1. South West College makes every effort to ensure that programmes are run in accordance with the information provided in both pre-application information and at the point of offer and acceptance, when the student contract is formed. However, there may be occasions when it is necessary to change a programme or discontinue it altogether. The options available to an applicant in such circumstances will vary depending on whether the applicant has accepted an offer.

### **17.2. Changes to programmes**

- i) Applicants who apply for a programme based on information that has substantially changed are made aware of the changes at their selection interview. The course curriculum team explain the details of the programme and respond to any applicant queries. If the interviewing tutor is aware of any possible future changes at the time of the interview, they are required to make the applicant aware at that time. The applicant is told what the changes are likely to be and when they will be finalised.
- ii) Where a change is made to a programme after an offer has been accepted e.g. change of programme location, change in advertised course timetable, affected applicants are notified in writing by letter sent by the Admissions team, containing course information provided by the curriculum team. Such applicants are given the option to withdraw their acceptance, thus releasing them from the student contract. UCAS applicants can withdraw their acceptance within 14 days of making their initial decision. After 14 days they should contact the UCAS Contact Centre for assistance.

- 17.3. Changes to programmes are most likely to occur when the programme is subject to

validation or re-validation. Marketing materials will clearly identify such programmes.

- i) Applicants who apply for a programme that is subsequently discontinued are notified in writing by a letter sent by the Admissions team. Applicants have the option to apply for an alternative programme at South West College or withdraw their application altogether, thus releasing them from the student contract. Applicants who choose to apply for an alternative programme must meet the entry requirements specific to that programme in order to receive an offer.

#### 17.4. Support available to applicants

South West College will support applicants in determining their next steps in the light of any changes to programmes or discontinuation of programmes. Where an applicant is holding an offer, South West College will assist them in securing an alternative place either internally or at another HE provider. Such assistance includes, contacting UCAS, using the UCAS course search and contacting Admissions offices at alternative HE providers.

#### 17.5. Terms and Conditions

The circumstances under which it may be necessary to make changes to a programme or discontinue a programme, are stated in the Terms and Conditions of the Student Contract. Terms and Conditions are made available to applicants at the point of offer.

### 18. Appeals and Complaints

- 18.1. The process for appealing or complaining against decisions made under this policy is outlined in Appendix 2

### 19. Monitoring and Review

- 19.1. The College will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist



the effective implementation of this Policy.

- 19.2. The College will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote this Policy effectively and is committed to reviewing this Policy in consultation with the recognised trade unions, statutory organisations such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and in line with models of good practice.

Signed Principal and Chief Executive: Celine McCarroll

Date: 2 April 2025

Signed Chair of the Governing Body: Nicholas O'Halloran

Date: 2 April 2025

## Appendix 1 General Information Regarding the Application of APEL



### Summary Evaluation of the Implementation of University and College Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Good Practice Guidelines Pilot February 2011

#### Executive Summary

This report should be read in conjunction with the full Accreditation of *Prior Experiential Learning (APEL): Good Practice Guidelines* documentation developed and endorsed by all of the Universities and Colleges providing higher education in Northern Ireland.

The APEL Development Working Group agreed a draft document *APEL: Guidelines* that outlined systems and processes for pilot implementation in the 2010 admissions process. The agreed *APEL: Guidelines* document we believe constitutes the first regionally-agreed protocol in the UK and is based on existing good practice within the Northern Ireland Regional Colleges and across the UK. The working group convened with a membership comprising representatives from; the six Further Education Regional Colleges, Queen's University Belfast, University of Ulster, Open University, *Foundation Degree Forward (fdf)*, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Alliance of Sector Skills Councils and the Department of Employment and Learning HE Widening Participation Branch.

The pilot process supported the deliberately small scale implementation of the *APEL Guidelines* Systems and processes. Each College nominated a part-time Foundation Degree for inclusion in the pilot which ran from June to October 2010. Given the size of the potential APEL applicant population in Northern Ireland and the need for wider marketing and promotional strategies to enhance understanding and information about APEL opportunities, the pilot could only be small scale. All six Regional Colleges had the opportunity to pilot all aspects of the *Guidelines* in order to benchmark current practice, consolidate or formalise previously informal processes or to develop new approaches.

All Colleges endorse the *Guidelines* documentation in its current form and recommend full implementation for 2011.

The *APEL Guidelines* document provides a useful information advice and guidance (IAG) support system for potential applicants to make informed decisions about their readiness to progress to a Foundation Degree (FD) or to lower level study that would serve to prepare for progression to FD at a later stage.

Potential exists to grow the market in both part-time and full-time routes. The part-time cohort represents the greatest scope for development as these students tend to be work-based and therefore have appropriate experience to offer for consideration within APEL.

#### Section 1 Introduction and Background

All six Colleges and both Universities finalised and agreed a draft *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Guidelines* document through consultations and meetings in May, June and September 2010. The objective then was to implement the APEL admissions processes to selected part-time Foundation Degrees in the 2010 admissions cycle.

#### Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose, methodology and process of the evaluation of the draft *APEL: Guidelines* documentation was presented and agreed with the members of the APEL Development Working Group on 29 September 2010, as follows:

- (i) To understand how the Guideline processes would function (process evaluation);
- (ii) To decide how well the Guideline processes would achieve the commonly-agreed objectives (outcome evaluation);
- (iii) To transform the Guidelines into a self-improving programme that would foster quality enhancement (short cycle evaluation).

Areas for assessment were identified as:

- (i) Successful approaches to the promotion of the *APEL: Guidelines* to target groups;
- (ii) The number of APEL applications considered and final decisions;
- (iii) The nature of the databases developed to capture the outcomes of the process;
- (iv) Any anecdotal feedback from students;
- (v) Identification of real costs of APEL procedures in order to finalise the APEL Application Fee and
- (vi) Definition of any other key areas that would warrant further investigation/development.

Comprehensive structured interview content was developed and interviews were completed on 11 January 2011. Key findings resulting from the evaluation process are outlined below.

## **Section 2 Guidelines Promotion and Target Groups**

Web-based promotion proved effective, including downloadable leaflets. Employers and professional associations, such as the Sector Skills Councils, also feature as key contacts to promote the availability of APEL. Mail shots followed by face -to -face follow -up visits are suggested as useful, with general recognition of the power of 'word of mouth' among the target groups. Colleges tended to use more accessible language in the promotion of APEL, such as 'enhanced interview process' or 'consideration by virtue of relevant experience'.

Key target groups for promotion include students on Level 3 courses at the Colleges, part-time students, work -based learners and employees seeking career enhancement. While the *APEL Guidelines* document and the processes it outlined will help increase enrolments across all FDs, it is likely that it will be most effective for part-time courses.

## **Section 3 Applicant Characteristics**

In general, APEL entrants are very motivated and have a strong desire to return to study. In some cases applicants are in unsatisfying jobs, want to re-train to up-skill or have experienced redundancy. In some sectors/foundation degree subjects, APEL applicants tend to be self-employed. APEL entrants tend to do well/excel on the programme and are very committed.

The APEL process, particularly the enhanced interview, provided opportunities for students to self-assess their eligibility to progress to the FD. At one College, about one-third of initial enquirers opted for an alternative, lower level course. English language challenges were noted in one APEL applicant case.

## **Section 4 Approaches Used within the APEL Guidelines**

Each College participating in the pilot adopted a context -specific approach to the stages within the agreed guidelines. This provided an opportunity to test the robustness of the guidelines and their flexibility in meeting individual institutional contexts. It is agreed that they are fit -for -purpose in both these regards.

## **Section 5 Roles, Resources and Fees**

There is a risk of 'key person' dependency in some APEL arrangements and the guidelines seek to spread knowledge and responsibilities for key roles across a professional team to include academic staff as well as administrative or quality unit staff). It is agreed that the guidelines provide clear remits for each of the required roles, the issue is more one of structural differences leading to a variety of staff/departments supporting APEL i.e. careers guidance staff, learning support team, admissions, academic support or quality improvement.

It is generally felt that, where possible, the APEL fee should be nominal to avoid exclusion and serve the intentions of widening participation. One College felt that the fee should be the same across the all Colleges in order to emphasise consistency within a regional system. It was generally recognised that as the processes outlined in the documentation are implemented there will be efficiencies in the time required for each case resulting from an increasing familiarity with the guidelines and the expertise gained across a typical range of portfolios.

## **Section 6 Diagnostic Tools and Skills Assessment**

There is confidence in the portfolio method to establish skills and abilities, although limited use was made of the mapping highlighted in Appendix B of the Guidelines. On the whole a professional judgement of readiness to progress was made based on a portfolio, responses to pre-set questions or a response/reflection assessment using subject specific material. One College used an appropriate programming and logic test for all FD applicants, not just the APEL applicants.

The enhanced interview process is a particularly effective diagnostic tool. It supports both the students' self-assessment of their readiness to progress and highlights any skills deficits to tutors.

Where used, building the portfolio could be a slow process with a lot of personal support given to students. However, the process was valuable to both the students and tutors. One College estimated the process as taking 10/12 hours per student.

## Section 7 Student Experience and Support

Normal support arrangements applied, including intensive skills assessment and referral to sources of academic support if required i.e. 'Work Smart' Mentors. At one College some extra support is required in ICT and study skills. However, this is balanced by a very positive response from APEL entrants to independent research or report-based assignments. The experience of the APEL applicants did not vary significantly from any other adult returners; the sample size is, however, small and this may become an issue as APEL intakes grow.

There were no specific comments on the Student Guidance Notes, which had been circulated and agreed earlier in the process. Interview and face-to-face contact is considered an important aspect of supporting the applicant through the stages of the APEL process.

## Section 8 Recommendations

It is agreed that the *APEL: Guidelines* document provides opportunities to become an effective recruitment tool and an important one to widen participation. All Colleges support full implementation of the *Guidelines* procedures as currently outlined in the documentation. One College noted that the additional entry route of APEL could support the development of part-time provision from the current full-time FD portfolio, by providing a supplementary recruitment tool and entry route.

Barriers to the wider implementation of the Guidelines are identified as:

- Risk of 'key person' dependency.

Solution-focused recommendations from the Colleges to support full implementation include:

- The *Guidelines* formalise previously informal and *ad-hoc* APEL systems while offering sufficient scope to contextualise approaches.
- Include APEL in the College Admissions Policy/Application materials, thus formalising a previous informal system.
- Establish a project team at the College to support implementing APEL process across Departments/Schools. Ensure that the *Guidelines* are understood and endorsed by SMTs and that they are included in the College Business Plan to support mainstreaming and funding from the Block Grant.
- Emphasise the role of quality assurance units within the College to drive forward APEL business with the Heads of Department and Course Directors.
- Manage student expectations; there are still standards to be applied and progression beyond entry will depend upon capacity to benefit from higher education.
- Roll out the APEL Guidelines beyond Foundation Degrees to all levels on the National Qualifications Guidelines.

Stephanie Harmar-Smith  
21 February 2011



## Northern Ireland Colleges and Universities APEL Good Practice Guidelines

### Approved by APEL Development Group

#### Section 1 Background and Strategic Overview

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is committed to the principle that higher education, and Foundation Degrees (FDs) in particular, are open to all those who have the ability to benefit from higher education. To help bring this about it wishes to encourage more people, who may have less in the way of formal qualifications, to consider applying for places in higher education on the basis of accredited prior experiential learning (APEL). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) defines APEL as a process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. The goal of APEL therefore is to value, recognise and assess an individual's experiential learning with a view to awarding credit for learning that occurs from life and work experiences.

An earlier consultation recommended that 'academic qualifications should not be a pre-requisite for entry to FD courses and that APEL is retained as a key principle of the FD philosophy'. APEL is especially relevant to people who hold vocational qualifications and/or those who wish to enhance their employment opportunities. It maps particularly well to work-based higher education qualifications such as FDs. While recognising that institutional autonomy applies, it is proposed that the Colleges and Universities subscribe to and apply the procedures of the Northern Ireland *APEL Guidelines* (NIAPELS).

The development of these Guidelines will be of key importance in ensuring the wider application of the widening participation agenda as it will provide an opportunity to grow and build student cohorts that would not normally progress to FDs. While some Colleges have established or emerging APEL policies, these Guidelines represents a model for implementing and achieving uniform APEL policy and practice. It should be read in conjunction with individual College Admissions Procedures

The *APEL Guidelines* presented here has been developed in association with all six Regional Colleges. Following a pilot for entry to a selection of FDs in 2010, dissemination and sector wide implementation is planned for 2011.

#### Section 2 Underpinning Principles

While institutional autonomy applies to the individual Admissions Procedures of the Northern Ireland Regional Colleges and the awarding bodies, the following principles underpin this Universities and Colleges *APEL Guidelines*.

1	Adherence to QAA APEL Principles for Guidance as contained in the QAA (2004) Guidelines for the Accreditation of Prior Learning. QAA definitions should be used for clarity and a consistent, shared understanding.
2	Governance of the implementation of the Guidelines will be via the higher education admissions process at the College, which adhere to the QAA Code of Practice, Section 10 Admissions to Higher Education. Final decisions on APEL applications will be signed-off by two members of College staff, namely the APEL Adviser/Higher Education Coordinator plus the subject specialist.
3	The outcome of the process of evaluating a student's Prior Experiential Learning may be twofold. Firstly it may be used to accredit a candidate with the necessary entry requirements for a particular programme. Secondly a student may be given exemption for specific module outcomes in line with the principle 4, below.
4	Any limitations of the <i>APEL Guidelines</i> must be clearly stated i.e. the maximum level of credit for which APEL application can be considered along with dates after which APEL applications can no longer be considered. While applications will be considered on a rolling basis throughout the year, normally a deadline of 31 May will apply (for enrolment to programmes commencing at the start of the following academic year) and applications after this date will be considered at the discretion of the College. The minimum on-course exemptions that can be applied for is one full module and the maximum is 50% of full Foundation Degree i.e. 120 Cats at Level 4.
5	In meeting Specific Course requirement s, the <i>APEL Guidelines</i> must establish clear evidence of the (i) knowledge/subject base

	considered to be equivalent to normal entry requirement i.e. A levels and other Level 3 courses (ii) skills base required to study successfully at a higher level. The Portfolio of Evidence should be assessed against the QAA Foundation Degree qualification Benchmark (October 2004), Subject Benchmarks and the Programme Specifications. Assessment will be made of an applicant's 'readiness to successfully progress'. Where agreeing on-course exemptions, due regard will be paid to the requirements of professional and statutory bodies.
6	Level 2 Essential Skills in Communication will be accepted in lieu of a grade C in GCSE English Language in fulfilment of General Entrance Requirements by the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast. Level 2 Essential Skills in Application of Number will be considered on an individual basis, when offered in lieu of a grade C in GCSE Maths, in fulfilment of General Entrance Requirements or Course Requirements by the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast.
7	The responsibility for the claim lies with the applicant. However Colleges will provide a Guidelines to support students in the understanding of the Guidelines and the production of an APEL claim.
8	Post Pilot Phase - Colleges will be permitted to charge a fee for APEL for Entry up to a maximum of £30 and a sliding scale of fees for on-course exemption up to a maximum of £30 per 20 CATS points (equivalent to £180 for maximum exemption of 120 CATS points). Pilot phase outcomes will inform if this fees scale is feasible.

### Section 3 Definitions

These *APEL Guidelines* recognise the definitions as contained in the QAA Guidelines on the Accreditation of Prior Learning (September 2004).

<b>Recognition of Learning/ Accreditation</b>	any process that acknowledges and establishes publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place and can be assessed to have done so.
<b>Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)</b>	a process for assessing and, as appropriate, recognising prior experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. This recognition may give the learning a credit value in a credit-based structure and allow it to be counted towards the completion of a programme of study and the award of qualifications associated with it.
<b>Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)</b>	a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.
<b>Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)</b>	a process, through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.
<b>APEL Adviser</b>	person with subject expertise to provide advice and guidance to applicants
<b>Authenticity</b>	the evidence should clearly relate to the applicant's own effort and achievements
<b>Credit</b>	is an educational currency which provides a measure of learning achieved at a given level?
<b>Currency</b>	the evidence should relate to current learning i.e. within the last five years. Where the course/subject and/or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent.
<b>Reliability</b>	the extent to which there is inter-assessor agreement or consistency in the assessment of claims.
<b>Sufficiency</b>	there should be sufficient written evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning being claimed.
<b>Validity:</b>	there should be a clear and transparent link between the learning being evidenced and the outcomes against which recognition is being sought.

### Section 4 APEL Roles and Responsibilities

The successful delivery of the *APEL Guidelines* will require the identification of existing staff to undertake two key roles, that of APEL Adviser and Subject Specialist. It is anticipated that existing staff in post will undertake these roles. The tasks associated with these roles and the responsibility of APEL applicants (students) are outlined below, along with a summary of the content of a Portfolio of Evidence. Draft Guidance Notes for Students are at Appendix A and a Checklist for College staff is outlined in Appendix B.

Who?	What?
<b>Applicant Responsibilities</b>	<p>Make initial contact, attend initial meeting with adviser, obtain paperwork and engage with the support Guidelines</p> <p>Identify existing skills and knowledge</p> <p>Match this against the learning outcomes of the programme / entry requirements</p> <p>Collect and collate evidence to support claim in consultation with the APEL Adviser/Subject Specialist</p> <p>Formally submit claim in required format within deadlines</p> <p>Inform APEL Adviser of any change in contact details</p> <p>Pay fee, if applicable</p>
<b>APEL Adviser Responsibilities</b>  To be undertaken by the HE Coordinator or Careers Guidance/Student Support/Information Services staff.	<p>Provide relevant materials and provide guidance on:</p> <p>The nature of APEL</p> <p>The entry requirements of the programme, including specific learning outcomes</p> <p>College procedure – structure, limits, process, fees</p> <p>Formulating a claim and demonstrating learning</p> <p>The assessment process</p> <p>The structure and content of a draft claim</p> <p>Advise applicant if APEL application is viable, making clear that this is not a guarantee of a successful outcome</p> <p>Receive and progress the claim</p> <p>Notify relevant college Departments/Offices/Services</p> <p>Liaison with appropriate representative of awarding body</p> <p>Administer the process monitoring and applicant feedback process</p> <p>Maintain records including database of decisions, tracking student progress, completion of exit statistics</p> <p>Advise on progression routes and career opportunities</p>
<b>College APEL Coordinator (can be delegated to Campus APEL Adviser)</b>	<p>Maintain an overview of the APEL process and procedures to ensure all quality assurance requirements are met.</p> <p>To receive information and track entry, progression and retention of APEL students.</p>
<b>Subject Specialist Responsibilities</b>  To be undertaken by Course Coordinators/Directors/Subject Leaders	<p>To assess the Portfolio of Evidence against the QAA Foundation Degree qualification Benchmark (October 2004) and the Programme Specifications.</p> <p>In cases of APEL for on-course exemption evidence will be assessed against the learning outcomes of the relevant module(s)</p>

## Section 5 The APEL Process

The table below outlines the APEL process and timeline for each stage. A copy of the Expression of Intent Form is at Appendix C. A copy of the APEL Application Form at Appendix D.

Stage	Task	Timeline
Stage 1	<b>Information and Individual Guidance to APEL Applicant</b> Outline of APEL process provided for potential applicants. Information and individual advice on APEL provided i.e. is the proposed evidence appropriate / likely to meet the entry criteria? Outcome is the submission of an Expression of Intent Form within one week of initial contact (see Appendix C).	Initial telephone contact / meeting.
Stage 2	<b>Guidance on Planning the APEL Claim</b> Distributing and explaining the Application Form and content/purpose of the Portfolio of Evidence. Introducing the learning outcomes against which the evidence will be assessed. This can include referral to relevant case studies. Informing the HE Coordinator of potential APEL application.	Within 2 weeks
Stage 3	<b>Preparing Materials and Evidence for submission to Support a Claim</b> Evidence may include: Practice-based documents Reports on observation of practice / witness statements Video/audio tapes, with commentary and analysis related to the achievement of learning outcomes Analytic and evaluative description of practice Statements from supervisors in relation to aspects of practice Continuing Professional Development (CPD) records and appraisals Reports of professional discussions	4 to 6 weeks with regular contact with APEL Adviser or Subject Specialist
Stage 4	<b>Assessing a claim – consultation and approval</b> Colleges need to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure equitable and consistent treatment of claims. Colleges should record activity for the individual and assimilate a dataset to ensure fairness and consistency of decisions. Outcomes of claims must be Insufficient Evidence, Approved or Not Approved. The assessment of the portfolio should be supplemented by a Viva Voce with the subject specialist to establish authenticity and reliability of evidence, understanding of the student on expectations of studying at Level 4 and their motivation to progress to Foundation Degree level study. Decisions should be ratified by both the APEL Adviser and Subject Specialist or by a relevant panel/committee at the College.	Normally within 3 working weeks during term-time. <sup>1</sup>
Stage 5	<b>Disseminating the Outcomes of a Claim</b> Informing of result of claim in timely manner i.e. insufficient evidence / approved / not approved. A Region Wide Database of decisions to be kept to ensure equitable and consistent treatment of claims.	Within 1 week of receiving an approved decision.
<b>Appeals Process &amp; Quality Assurance</b>	Colleges should establish an Appeals Process to ensure that Appeals are dealt with fairly and consistently. There is no external appeals process. Where on-course exemption is awarded, portfolios should be made available to External Examiners via the Validation Panel. An outline of an Appeal Process is given in Appendix E.	Appeals to be submitted within 10 days of decision.

<sup>1</sup> The APEL Adviser will revise turnaround times, in consultation with subject specialists, for APEL applications submitted after 31 May or during the summer holiday period. Colleges will undertake to provide appropriate cover during holiday periods to allow processing of APEL applications in timely manner.



## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

**INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS TO THE  
NI COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY  
ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APEL) BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

**What do we mean by proper informal and non-formal learning and APEL?**

Prior informal learning is learning based on experience. It includes all learning which you have done up to this point which has not already been formally assessed. This includes prior learning gained through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as prior learning gained through community-based learning, workplace learning and training, continuing professional development and independent learning.

APEL is a process through which the learning you have gained from experience can be counted.

APEL can help you to:

- Think about the learning you have already achieved and to plan how to build on this learning to meet your personal and career goals.
- Get a place on an appropriate Foundation Degree at a college if you don't have the normal entry qualifications but can show that you have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Gain credit towards modules of a Foundation Degree so as to shorten the normal period of learning by showing that you already have the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for particular parts of the programme or qualification (eg units or modules).

It is important to stress that recognition or credit is not given for the experience itself. It is what you have learned from experience that counts.

Who is APEL for?

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) can benefit:

- Individuals in the workplace looking for recognised credit for entry to an academic programme at higher education level.
- learners who may have exited a higher education programme prior to completion or the receipt of credit and who wish to count that learning towards another award;
- learners who wish to 'top up' an existing qualification.

Your APEL Adviser at the College will support you through the APEL process by:

- Introducing you to the *APEL Guidelines*.
- Building your confidence as a learner through identifying your strengths and skills.
- Advising you on how to prepare your portfolio of evidence of learning using the APEL profiling tool.

**APEL and Foundation Degrees**

The requirements for the Foundation Degree programme are outlined in the course -leaflet which you will have received prior to interview. You should note GCSE English Language/Maths at grade C are still required, however Level 2 Essential Skills in Communication will be accepted in lieu of a grade C in GCSE English Language in fulfilment of General Entrance Requirements by the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast. Level 2 Essential Skills in Application of Number will be considered on an individual basis, when offered in lieu of a grade C in GCSE Maths, in fulfilment of General Entrance Requirements or Course Requirements by the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast. During the interview process the APEL Adviser or member of the course team will have discussed your professional qualifications and experience. For applicants who do not meet the entry requirements consideration for entry to the programme may alternatively be based on accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL). All APEL claims must be made to the APEL Adviser/Higher Education Coordinator using the APEL Application Form and submitted with the evidence of learning. The APEL Advisor will guide you

through the process and a subject specialist will review your experience against the skills/knowledge criteria for the course.

## WHAT DOES APEL INVOLVE?

APEL is about getting evidence and explaining how it allows you to meet the knowledge and skills requirements for a course of study. This means that you must reflect on that experience and on the learning that you have already achieved as a result. Before you go through the process of APEL there is an important guiding principle you should remember.

It is what you have learned that is being recognised, not what you have done.

So, for example, two people might have the same experience through doing identical jobs but one might have learned much more from the task(s) involved than the other. People who have learned something are able to use that learning to help them in other related situations. So you need to provide evidence of what you have learned from your experiences, not just describe what you've done. This involves reflecting on your experiences and drawing out from them what you have learned, then writing this down and talking about it with your facilitator. The writing and the talk will help to provide the evidence you need.

## PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

Your claim for APEL is to be supported by a Portfolio of Evidence of Learning including a Personal Reflection and examples of evidence to authenticate your claim. Your Portfolio should contain:

- Title page
- Table of contents
- Curriculum Vitae
- Employment History
- Education & Training History
- Training and Professional Qualifications
- Informal Learning Activities e.g. conferences/workshops etc.

Additional Information to support your submission can include:

- Practice-based documents
- Reports on observation of practice
- Video/audio tapes, with commentary and analysis related to the achievement of learning outcomes
- Analytic and evaluative description of practice
- Statements from supervisors in relation to aspects of practice
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) records and appraisals
- Reports of professional discussions
- Reflective statements.

That evidence is then assessed by the APEL Adviser and Subject Specialist at a college. The table below outlines the criteria that will be used to assess your portfolio of evidence.

<b>Currency</b>	Your evidence should relate to current learning i.e. within the last five years. Where the course/subject and/or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent.
<b>Reliability</b>	the extent to which there is inter-assessor agreement or consistency in the assessment of claims.
<b>Sufficiency</b>	there should be sufficient written evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning being claimed.
<b>Validity:</b>	there should be a clear and transparent link between the learning being evidenced and the outcomes against which recognition is being sought.

Once the evidence has been assessed and once it is decided that your evidence meets the Foundation Degree, Subject Benchmark Statements/Module Learning Outcomes you will be notified of the outcome of your APEL application

There is no right or wrong way to learn – everybody is different and everybody learns in different ways.

### Different styles of learning

Learning is a process which involves gaining knowledge, processing information and making connections between different bits of knowledge. Adults are likely to learn differently from the way children learn – and are likely to have different reasons for wanting to learn. It has also been suggested that men and women might learn in different ways.

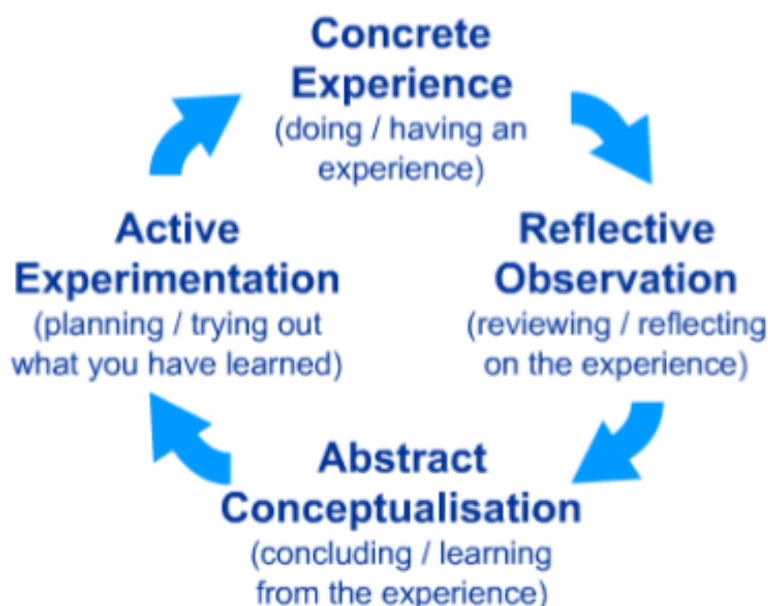
Sometimes we learn by experience. Over time we do things repeatedly and improve how we do things (i.e. through learning to get better at it) or we watch others doing things and learn from observation. We also learn by reflecting on our experiences, going over in our minds how we did something, how we might do it better next time, what was good about what we did and what could be better.

### How do we learn from experience?

Most people learn a great deal from doing something (or seeing someone else do something), experiencing (or seeing) the consequences of that action and 'learning a lesson' as a result.

People may often learn more from the experience of doing something than from reading books or from listening to a trainer or lecturer. Learning can be an individual or a shared experience.

Various attempts have been made to describe the process of learning but it is often described as a learning cycle in four stages.



#### STAGE 1 - DOING

Learning begins with a real experience – this can be any experience of 'event'. It may be a specific experience or a series of related tasks/experiences in connection with your job

#### STAGE 2 - REVIEWING

The experience or event may 'make us think'. If we do, we move into Stage 2 of the cycle.

#### STAGE 3 - CONCLUDING

Thinking about the experience may make you realise that 'there is more to it than meets the eye', that the experience is simply one example of a pattern of things. We may begin to make connections to form ideas or theories about what that pattern is. We may make generalisations about the experience.

We may, of course, then confirm those ideas by repeating similar experiences and maybe observing similar results.

#### STAGE 4 - PLANNING

However, we may go on to apply those ideas to new or different situations in order to test them out. If our ideas are borne out in practice then the 'lesson has been truly learnt' and we are likely to apply it in future situations/experiences, and so the cycle may be related.

### **WHAT TYPES OF EXPERIENCE CAN WE LEARN FROM?**

We can learn from any experience we have had or some event we have observed which was significant to us in some way. Any experience/event will do: it could be from work, home, leisure – anything at all, as long as we feel it as significant.

It might be significant because it:

- Taught us a great deal.
- Had successful outcomes.
- Gave us a sense of achievement.
- Earned us respect and recognition from others.
- Involved a major investment of time, energy or effort.
- Changed the way we did things.

Examples of types of work-related learning experience we might consider include, but are not limited to:

- A particular piece of work, task or project undertaken at work, or through community learning and development or voluntary work or independent study.
- The experience of doing a particular job (paid or unpaid) over a period of time.
- An educational or training course which may have been assessed but was not credit-rated by an academic institution.
- The experience of training or teaching others, either formally or informally.

### **WHAT IS REFLECTION?**

Learning through reflection is a skill that involves thinking about our own experiences from the past, thinking about our feelings about those experiences and drawing out some of the lessons that we have learned from those experiences.

We can reflect on our learning in a number of ways – for example, reflection might be an activity that we do thinking by ourselves. Or it might occur in a more social setting – for example as part of a group learning situation where we talk about and reflect on our experiences and share these thoughts with other people.

Reflection is something that we often do as part of our day-to-day activities – we often reflect as we are doing things and sometimes change the way that we do things according to that reflection. At other times, reflection is used long after an event or activity has been completed. In both cases, reflection can help us learn from ourselves and our experiences.

#### **How do we reflect?**

One way to reflect is to simply think about things from the start of an event to the completion of that event. Another way to reflect is to ask ourselves questions about our work experience. The questions below can help you organise the outcomes from your reflection:

We might ask:

- What did I do in that role?
- What were my main responsibilities and tasks?
- How easy or difficult did I find that role?
- What were some of the challenges I faced undertaking that role?
- What have I learned from undertaking that role?



## Appendix B College Staff Checklist

Staff should be familiar with the NI College and University *APEL Guidelines* and the associated policy documents of the College. Below is a checklist to guide staff through the APEL process for individual applications.

Tasks	Yes / No	Comments
Arrange meeting with applicant. Advise on most appropriate programme of study. Recommend any further sources of advice. Discuss learning from experience and sources of evidence to be used in claim. Agree timeframe and action plan for putting claim together Provide Guidance Notes and Application Form to candidate. Inform HE Coordinator / Subject Specialist as appropriate.		

	Consideration of Portfolio of Evidence	Comments
1	<p>Is the background of the experiential learning relevant to the degree sought?            Does the evidence support the achievement of each of the knowledge, skills and understandings as contained in the QAA Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark?</p> <p>(i) Critical understanding of the well-established principles in their field of study and the way in which those principles have developed;</p> <p>(ii) Successful application in the workplace of the range of knowledge and skills learnt throughout the programme;</p> <p>(iii) Ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, and the application of</p>	

	<p>those principles in a work context;</p> <p>(iv) Knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s), and the ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in their field of study and apply those in a work context;</p> <p>(v) An understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge in their field of study and in a work context;</p> <p>(vi) Ability to use a range of techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis in their field of study and in a work context;</p> <p>(vii) Ability to effectively communicate information, arguments, and analysis, in a variety of forms, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively in their field of study and in a work context;</p> <p>(viii) Ability to undertake further training, develop existing skills, and acquire new competencies that will enable them to assume responsibility within organisations;</p> <p>(ix) Qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and progression to other qualifications requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision making;</p> <p>(x) Ability to use opportunities for lifelong learning.</p>	
--	---	--

		Yes/No	Comments
2	How well presented is the portfolio? Scale of 1 to 5 with 5 Excellent		
3	Does the portfolio meet the requirements of currency and authenticity?		
4	Have any additional activities been carried out in support of the portfolio i.e. viva, performance assessment, interview?		
5	Does the portfolio of evidence, in your opinion, clearly meet and map to the learning outcomes of the module(s) for which exemption is sought? Please refer to the relevant programme specifications.		
7	Are there any additional comments you believe are relevant to the final decision?		
8	Do you recommend that the exemption requested is awarded? Please state the level and volume of exemption you recommend. Please provide a rationale for your decision.		

Signature (Subject Specialist)

Date:

Signature (APEL Coordinator)

Date:

## Appendix C Expression of Intent to Submit an APEL Application

Surname:		
Forename(s):		
Title:		
APEL Reference Number		
Contact Details Home Address:  Postcode: Email address:	Telephone Number(s) Home: Work: Mobile:	
I have met with the APEL Coordinator and wish to give notice of my intent to submit an APEL application for: Entry to the following Foundation Degree:  Exemption from the following Foundation Degree Module(s)		
Personal Statement – Please provide details of your interest in and motivation to study your chosen Foundation Degree.		
Student Signature Date		
OFFICIAL USE ONLY APEL Campus Adviser Signature Forwarded to College APEL Coordinator/HE Adviser		

## Appendix D APEL Application Form

Please make sure you have read and fully understood the Student Guidance Notes before completing this forms and your portfolio of Evidence. College staff are available to help you.

PART 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION	
Surname:	
Forename(s):	
Title:	
Date of Birth:	
Student ID (if applicable)	
<p>If you have already submitted an Application for full-time study via UCAS, please insert your UCAS number here:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> 11 -                      - </div>	
<p>Contact Details</p> <p>Home Address:</p>          <p>Postcode:</p>	
<p>Telephone Number(s)</p> <p>Home:</p> <p>Work:</p> <p>Mobile</p> <p>Email address:</p>	
<p>Employer Name and Address:</p>          	



<b>PART 2: PROPOSED COURSE OF STUDY</b>
Foundation Degree Title:
Mode of attendance:

Please tick the level of APEL for which you are applying:		
(i)	Entry	
(ii)	On-course Exemption – please list the module(s) for which you are seeking exemption. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
(iii)	Both Entry and On-Course Exemption	

<b>PART 3: OUTLINE OF APEL CLAIM</b>		
I enclose the following documentation:		
(i)	APEL Application Form	
(ii)	Portfolio	
Signature		Date:

**Please return this form and evidence to the APEL Adviser**

# Outcome of Claim – Official Use only

To be completed by APEL Adviser / HE Coordinator

Name of Candidate:	
Course Applied for:	

		Please ✓
Decision:	Insufficient Evidence – refer back to applicant	
	Application approved	
	Application not approved	
Comments:		

Entry to Foundation Degree		
Details of Exemption to be awarded		
Signature (APEL Coordinator)		
Signature (Subject Specialist)		
Signature (Chair of Panel)		
Outcome reported to candidate	Date:	
Information reported to Course Committee	Date:	
Decision and Detail Recorded on Database	Date:	

## Appendix E Appeals Process

The Appeals process only applies where an applicant feels that the APEL process has not been conducted as per the Guidelines as outlined here. An applicant who feels that the assessment criteria have not been applied correctly will have the right of appeal against the selection decision.

Applicants expressing dissatisfaction should be informed that all appeals on APEL decisions must be made as detailed below.

### Stage 1

The applicant (or his/her parent/guardian/legal carer if aged under 18) must submit to the course Centre Manager the grounds for the appeal, in writing, within ten days of receipt of the decision. The APEL Coordinator and Subject Specialist will review the decision and inform the applicant of the outcome of their appeal and the reasons for reaching this decision within ten days of receipt of the appeal.

### Stage 2

If not mutually resolved at Stage 1 the applicant must submit to the relevant Programme Area Manager the grounds of the appeal, in writing, within ten days of receipt of the appeal decision given at Stage 1. The Programme Area Manager will call a meeting of the applicant and the course selector within ten days of receipt of this information to hear the appeal. The Programme Area Manager's decision on the appeal will be final.

Appeals will only be heard where the applicant:

- Can provide new information not available at the time of application
- OR
- Disagrees with a decision made in accordance with the *APEL Guidelines/Admissions Procedures*
- OR
- Believes that the *APEL Guidelines/Admissions Procedures* has not been applied correctly in the processing of the application

All stages of the appeal must be documented and held on file.

## Appendix 2 - South West College Procedure for Admissions Feedback (Unsuccessful Admissions)

### 1. Purpose of Procedure

- 1.1 To clarify the arrangements for applicants to obtain feedback about an unsuccessful application, to appeal a selection decision or to complain about the admissions process.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 South West College (SWC) is committed to providing fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices to all prospective students. The College believes that providing constructive feedback to all prospective students will support them in achieving a successful outcome in the future. For the purposes of this procedure the College is committed to providing feedback, when requested, to anyone who's application to study at undergraduate level has been unsuccessful.

### 3. Feedback

- 3.1 Feedback, in this context, is defined as '**information about why an application was unsuccessful**'. Any unsuccessful applicant to the College may request feedback on an admissions decision.
- 3.2 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. An applicant who wishes to make a complaint about the admission process may do so using the College's Complaints & Compliments Policy. Please note that the Complaints & Compliments Policy cannot be used to challenge an academic decision to refuse an application.
- 3.3 Each Department is responsible for making selection decisions on all applications to its programmes. Each Department has published information on the College website relating to its selection criteria and procedures and this information, together with the information given in the decision notice sent to the applicant, will be helpful to many candidates in explaining why their application has been unsuccessful.

- 3.4 Applicants are therefore advised to read this information prior to approaching the College admissions office with a formal request for feedback.

#### **4. Procedure for Requesting Feedback**

- 4.1 The following procedure should be used to request feedback regarding an unsuccessful application to the College.

4.1.1 Requests for feedback should be made in writing to the relevant admissions office, within 20 working days following notification of the original admissions decision. Email or in writing. Applicants should include their full name, UCAS number (if the application was made through UCAS). Whilst admissions staff are able to provide general advice and information to candidates over the telephone, it is not always possible to provide detailed feedback by telephone.

4.1.2 The admissions office will respond in writing (usually by email or in writing to each request for feedback within 20 working days of receipt of the request.

4.1.3 The College prefers to deal directly with applicants, and where possible, a request for feedback or the submission of an appeal should be made by the applicant, not by a third party. In cases where a request is submitted by a third party, data protection legislation may prevent the College from releasing information relating to an individual's application unless the College receives specific written permission from the applicant allowing them to deal with the third party. Should an applicant wish a third party to act on his/her behalf, for example because the applicant is indisposed at that time, or has disabilities which would make it difficult for him/her to submit an appeal or complaint directly, the applicant must provide written authorisation, including the name and contact details of the relevant third party.

#### **5. Appeals**

5.1 An appeal is defined as 'a formal request for a selection decision to be reviewed'. An appeal will only be considered where there are adequate grounds, as set out below.

5.1.1 Where there is substantial new information which, for good reason, was not made available either on the original application or during the selection procedure.

5.1.2 Where that new information is significant and directly relevant to the original decision.

Please note that the new information must relate directly to the original application and cannot include activities or achievements which have taken place or been ratified subsequently.

5.1.3 Where there is evidence that the College's published Admissions Policy has not been followed.

5.2 **Appeals put forward on any other grounds** will not be considered. Please note that the College will not consider appeals that are based on errors made by external organisations, agencies or individuals. For example, inaccurate predictions of future grades; disputes about the grading of formal examinations; comments made by referees or agents.

5.3 In the event of an applicant not being satisfied with the outcome of an admissions appeal and all College internal processes have been exhausted students have the right to present their appeal to the validating University Partners i.e., Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University for consideration.

## 6. **Special Circumstances**

6.1 SWC is not best placed to fairly and consistently take account of any special circumstance affecting an applicant's performance in pre-entry qualifications and will not consider appeals based on such circumstances. Examples of special circumstances include personal or family illness. The College expects applicants to have taken appropriate action to ensure that the relevant examination bodies have allowed for such circumstances prior to the announcement of results or following an appeal to the examination body.

## 7. **Procedure for Appealing an Admissions Decision**

7.1 The following procedure should be followed if an applicant believes, in line with the above guidance, that they have grounds for appeal against an admissions decision.

### 7.1.1 **First Stage: Informal Resolution**

Enquiries about admissions decisions should normally be made in writing by the applicant and should be directed to the Admissions Office via [admissions@swc.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@swc.ac.uk)

in the first instance. If necessary, Admissions staff will consult with relevant academic staff before responding to the query. A written response will be made to every written enquiry (i.e. by letter or email), normally within 10 working days, and this written response will mark the completion of the informal stage.

#### **7.1.2 Second Stage: Formal Letter to Head of Quality and Student Engagement**

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the explanation offered should put their concerns in writing to the Head of Quality and Student Engagement, normally within 10 working days of receiving an unsatisfactory outcome from Stage 1. The formal letter should set out the grounds for dissatisfaction with the initial response from the Admissions Office and include any previous correspondence.

#### **7.1.3 Third Stage: Appeal**

The Head of Quality and Student Engagement will conduct any additional inquiries necessary to review the appeal and ensure it meets the required criteria. If there are valid grounds for appeal, an Appeals Panel will be formed by the Head of Quality and Student Engagement in consultation with the relevant Head of Department. The Appeals Panel will include a senior academic from the College Department and an experienced member of the admissions team who was not involved in the original decision. Note that there will be no appeal hearing if the Head of Quality and Student Engagement determines that the admissions decision was made correctly and impartially based on written criteria, such as when the appellant clearly did not meet the required grades for entry. A written response will then be provided, typically within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.

7.1.4 No applicant will be discriminated against in any future application on the basis of appealing a previous admissions decision.

7.1.5 The Head of Quality and Student Engagement, in conjunction with Student Services will collate annual statistics relating to the number of formal appeals received and the outcomes.

7.1.6 The timelines outlined in this procedure apply to investigations conducted during semester periods and may not prove possible to meet during holiday periods.

However, the College aims to respond to enquiries as promptly as possible given the circumstances.

## **8. Complaints**

- 8.1 A complaint is defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction with an action or lack of action taken by the College, or with the standard of the service provided’.
- 8.2 Complaints relating to admissions will be managed in accordance with the College’s Complaints & Compliments Policy which can be obtained from Students Services or the College’s internal and external website. This procedure should be used when an applicant (or the applicant’s representative) is dissatisfied with the service they have received from the college with regard to an application.
- 8.3 The Complaints & Compliments Policy cannot be used as a means to change a selection decision. However, if in the course of investigating a complaint the investigator believes there are grounds for an appeal against the selection decision, the investigator may advise the applicant to submit a formal appeal.



## Related Documentation

Title	Location	Owner
College Information, Advice and Guidance Policy	Gateway	
Accuracy and Completeness of Public Information Policy and Process	Gateway	Head of Higher Education
Fees and Charges Policy 2023/24	Gateway	Head of Finance
Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy	Gateway	Quality Assurance Manager
Fitness To Practice Policy	Gateway	Head of Higher Education

## Change Log

Location	Change from deletion/addition	Change to
Section 4.5	Clarification required re definition of UCAS whereby SWC applicants apply directly to SWC, with the exception of a small number of courses for which applicants must apply to UCAS.	The University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), through whom a small number of applications for full-time undergraduate prescribed HE courses must be made and processed e.g. UU BSc (Hons) Social Work and QUB BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies.
9.1	Remove reference to a specific application form for OU validated applications	Reference to a specific application form for OU validated applications has been removed from the Policy.
Appendix 2	Remove reference that OU validated applicants can escalate an appeal to the OU	Reference to admissions appeals being escalated to the Opening University has been removed from the policy
Appendix 2	Ensure clear timelines are included within the Admissions Appeals Process	The appeals process and timelines have been revised

## Communication

<b>Who needs to know (for action)</b>	Senior Management Team Heads of Faculty Heads and Deputy Heads of School Course Coordinators HLA Manager Quality Manager Quality Team Marketing Team Student Support and Engagement Team Applicants Students
<b>Who needs to be aware</b>	All SWC staff

## Communication Plan

Action	By Whom	By When
Upload to Gateway	Nicola Nugent	On approval
Circulation to all staff	Nicola Nugent	On approval

## Document Development

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

Name	Role
Julie Kelly	Higher Education Coordinator

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?
0.1	01/11/2021	Liam Curran	Yes	V2.0	No	No
V2.0	20.05.2024	Liam Curran / Julie Kelly	Yes	V3.0	No	Yes
V3.0	31.01.25	Julie Kelly / Brian McIllduff	Yes	V4.0	No	