



POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Higher Education Admissions and Admission Appeals Policy

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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. Accreditation of Prior Learning - APL	15
11. Document Verification and Fraud	16
12. Mature and Young Applications	17
13. Care Leavers	17
14. Applicants with Disabilities or Specific Learning Needs	17
15. International Students	19
16. Applicants making a Criminal History Disclosure	20
17. Changes to and Discontinuation of Programmes	20
18. Appeals and Complaints	22
19. Monitoring and Review	22
Appendix 1 – South West College Procedure for Admissions Feedback (Unsuccessful Admissions)	24
Related Documentation	30
Change Log	30
Communication	31
Communication Plan	31
Document Development	31
Approval Dates	32
Document History	33

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy supports South West College's (SWC's) 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, unsuccessful prospective students or referred 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 ‘Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy’ and is available on the College website <https://swc.ac.uk/about/corporate/policies-reports-strategies>

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: The UK National Information Centre provides comparisons of international qualifications to the British education system and awards.
- 4.7 The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA): The principal competition regulator in the United Kingdom, responsible for promoting competitive markets, protecting consumers from unfair trading, and providing advice on competition and consumer law.

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 based on 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 – refer to Appendix 1.

7. Recruitment Activities

- 7.1 South West College hosts annually, events 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 students' 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 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 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 via 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 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. 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 and the College's Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Procedure for further details regarding Accreditation 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 Teams, 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 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) The College Terms and Conditions, as well as the College's procedures, policies and regulations, your offer letter and the online prospectus as at the date of the offer, form the contract between you and the College in relation to your studies. Applicants are invited to read the College's Terms and Conditions before accepting their offer - visit <https://swc.ac.uk/terms-conditions>. Applicants who have applied through UCAS are required to accept or decline online via UCAS Track. Applicants are advised that by accepting an offer and proceeding to enrol they agree to the College Terms and Conditions.
- vii) Applicants who accept their offer have the standard 14-day 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 1.
- 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. Accreditation of Prior Learning - APL

10.1 The College Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Procedure aims to recognise learning achieved outside formal education systems. This can include work experience, vocational training, or other life experiences. It is based on the premise that learning can be identified, measured, assessed and accredited within academic courses, regardless of the context in which it is acquired.

10.2 Two forms of prior learning are recognised by this procedure:

- i) **Accredited Prior Certificated Learning (APCL).** This is learning associated with a structured, formal course of study, which has already been assessed and accredited, either in higher education or by a professional body. 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.
- ii) **Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).** This is learning acquired through life, work experience and study not previously attested through formal education or certification.

10.3 Exemptions and Limitations to the Award of Credit

- i) Exemptions will be considered for a minimum of one module only.
- ii) Exemptions may be granted for whole modules only, save in the exception where a module is clearly defined into theoretical and practical elements. In this case, claims may be considered for either the theoretical or practical components.
- iii) Exemptions will only be considered for a maximum credit value or programme percentage in line with Awarding Body requirements. Applicants should refer to the SWC APL Procedure for guidance on the Maximum Credit Exemption.

10.4 Instances where APL 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.

10.5 All APL assessment decisions regarding the award of credit will be verified by the relevant APL Advisor / Course Director and reported to the APL Board.

10.6 Appeals

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

11. Document Verification and Fraud

11.1 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 presentation 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.

11.2 Applicants should be aware that significant evidence of fraud or plagiarism will result in the application being rejected.

11.3 International qualifications will be checked for academic comparability using the online UK ENIC qualifications database.

11.4 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.

11.5 Applicants who wish to appeal the decision to cancel an application based on fraud,

may do so through the Admissions Appeals and Complaints process. For more information, please refer to Appendix 1.

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 include Social Work, Early Years, Counselling, Health and Social Care, Teacher Training and Education and Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools.

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 Student Engagement Officers 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. 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, since 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 Quality and Student Engagement 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 international 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 applicants 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. Refer to the College policy and procedure for the declaration and handling of criminal history disclosures via <https://swc.ac.uk/about/corporate/policies-reports-strategies>
- 16.3 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).

17. Changes to and Discontinuation of Programmes

- 17.1 South West College will use reasonable endeavours to deliver programmes in accordance with the descriptions set out in the programme offer, in accordance with the College Terms and Conditions and in line with Consumer Protection Law. In doing so, the College will provide prospective students with material information on the course offered, including the structure of course, and the fees/costs, before they decide about which courses and HE providers to apply to. However, there may be occasions when it is necessary to change a programme or discontinue it altogether.
- 17.2 Changes to programmes:
- i) The College may need to change programme details due to factors beyond its

control, therefore it may sometimes be necessary to vary the terms or content of the programme or services described in the Prospectus. These may include, but are not limited to, if Awarding Organisations or Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Bodies update a specification, make changes to the requirements to achieve a particular programme, or require alternative content to be covered in order for students to achieve the qualification, or, for example, if funding bodies vary the criteria required for a programme to receive public or Student Loans Company funding. If such changes occur, the College will inform you, and you may cancel your contract or switch to another programme without penalty.

- ii) If there are not sufficient enrolments to make a programme viable, the College may be forced to cancel the programme. If you have received an offer for a programme which the College discontinues prior to you registering at the College, the College will notify you as soon as possible prior to the start date of the programme and will use reasonable endeavours to provide a suitable replacement programme for which you are qualified or advise accordingly on alternative provision. If the College is unable to provide a suitable replacement programme, you, or the College, may cancel and withdraw from the programme without any liability for programme fees (even if the cancellation referenced below has expired). Applicants who choose to apply for an alternative programme must meet the entry requirements specific to that programme in order to receive an offer;
- iii) 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. If we are proposing to make a significant change to your programme (such as, without limitation, the removal of a module), we will consult with you as soon as possible and in the case of the removal of a module, we will provide you with a suitable replacement module.
- iv) The College reserves the right to vary minor elements of your programme in line with the awarding body regulations, such as to improve the quality of educational services, to meet the latest requirements of a commissioning or accrediting body, in response to student feedback, and/or due to a lack of student demand for certain modules. Any such changes that occur after the start date will follow suitable consultation with students to ensure their full approval.

17.3 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. If an applicant chooses to cancel the contract (and withdraw from the programme) in accordance with this section, the College will use reasonable endeavours to assist them in finding an alternative comparable programme. Such assistance includes contacting UCAS, using the UCAS course search and contacting Admissions offices at alternative HE providers.

17.4 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. Applicants are invited to read the College's Terms and Conditions by visiting <https://swc.ac.uk/terms-conditions>

18. **Appeals and Complaints**

18.1 The process for appealing or complaining against decisions made under this policy is outlined in Appendix 1

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 McCarlan

Date: 04.02.26

Signed Chair of the Governing Body: Nick Holter

Date: 04/02/2026

Appendix 1 – South West College Procedure for Admissions Feedback (Unsuccessful Admissions)

1. Purpose of Procedure

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

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 whose 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

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

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

4.2 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).

4.3 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 their 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 Partner i.e., Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University for consideration.

6. **Special Circumstances**

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 Appeal/Resolution

Within 10 days of receiving an admissions decision, the students must email the Admissions Office via admissions@swc.ac.uk. This email should include details of the appeal and a contact telephone number. 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), within 5 working days, and this written response will mark the completion of the informal stage.

7.1.2 Second Stage: Formal Appeal

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the explanation offered by the informal stage should put their concerns in writing to the Head of Quality and Student Engagement. The formal letter should set out the grounds for dissatisfaction with the initial response from the Admissions Office and include any previous correspondence. 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 within 10 days of receipt of the formal appeal letter. 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.

The possible outcomes of an appeal include:

1. **Appeal upheld:** The student will be offered a place on the programme
2. **Appeal rejected:** The original decision stands.
3. **Further review required:** Additional steps or evidence may be needed.

7.2 Appeal Timeline

Stage	Maximum Duration	Action
Informal Appeal	Within 10 working days* of notification of decision	Student lodges informal appeal in writing
Consideration of Informal Appeal	Within 5 working days of Receipt	Admissions staff consults with Course Committee re informal appeal and issues response to student and Course Committee.
Formal Appeal	Within 10 working days of completion of Informal process	Student lodges Formal appeal in writing to Head of Quality and Student Engagement
Consideration of Formal Appeal	Within 10 working days of Receipt	Appeals Panel considers Formal Appeal and issues response to student and Course Committee.

*Working days are those days on which the College is open. Weekends, statutory days, Bank Holidays, and other College closures are classed as 'non-working' days.

7.2.1 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.

7.2.2 No applicant will be discriminated against in any future application based on appealing a previous admissions decision.

7.2.3 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.

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 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	Gateway	Head of Finance
Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy	Gateway	Head of Quality and Student Engagement
Fitness To Practice Policy	Gateway	Head of Higher Education
HE Accreditation of Prior Learning Procedure	Gateway	

Change Log

Location	Change from deletion/addition	Change to
Title Page	Higher Education Admissions and Admission Appeals and RPL Policy	Higher Education Admissions and Admission Appeals Policy
3.3	Policy name change	Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy'
4.7	Definition included for CMA	The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)
6.5	Appendix 1 Appeals Policy referenced	
9.11 vi	Reference and links added for Terms of Reference	
10.1	Sentence removed which states that APEL will not be used to meet the entry requirements	
10.2	Clarity provided on the types of prior learning recognised	Statements covering APCL and APEL
10.3	Clarification provided on module exemptions and signposting to credit limitations	
12.3	Removed section: All other courses will assess learners under the age of 18 at the point of entry on a case-by-case basis.	
12.4	Removed section: 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.	
14.6	Statement removed: It may not be reasonable to accommodate all requests for special arrangements	

Location	Change from deletion/addition	Change to
14.8	Head of Higher Education	Head of Quality and Student Engagement
16.1 and 16.2	Students are signposted to College policy and procedure for the declaration and handling of criminal history disclosures via https://swc.ac.uk/about/corporate/policies-reports-strategies	Section has been updated to include reference and clarity in relation to SWC College Terms and Conditions in line with Consumer Protection Law.
17	Any ambiguity removed re how students are impacted regarding potential changes to programmes	Clarity is provided re. what constitutes changes to programmes and how students are impacted. T&Cs referenced.
17.4	Terms and Conditions are linked	
App 1 7.1.1	Timeline updated from 10 to 5 days	A written response will be made to every written enquiry (i.e. by letter or email), within 5 working days
7.1.2	Potential 'Outcome of Appeal' has been added	
7.2	Appeal Timeline table added	

Communication

Who needs to know (for action)	Senior Management Team Heads and Deputy Heads of School Course Coordinators HLA Manager Quality Manager & Team Marketing Team Student Support and Engagement Team Applicants Students
Who needs to be aware	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
Brian McIllduff	Head of Quality & Student Engagement

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	4 February 2026

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	31.01.2025	Julie Kelly / Brian McIlduff	Yes	V4.0	No	
V4.0	29.04.2025	Julie Kelly / Brian McIlduff	Yes	V5.0	No	Yes