# Further Education Admissions Policy

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<th>Policy reference number</th>
<th>SP004</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Further Education Admissions Policy</td>
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<td>Responsible committee and officer</td>
<td>Admissions &amp; Course Information Officer</td>
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<td>Original author:</td>
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## Approval

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<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date approved</th>
<th>Approving committee</th>
<th>Individuals/groups to be notified (if relevant)</th>
<th>Committee officer signature</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>30/04/19</td>
<td>Board of Management</td>
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### Overview
This policy provides the basis for admissions into further education courses provided by the colleges within the UHI partnership.

### Purpose
The policy governs the application process to be used by all students considering applying to a further education course in any of the colleges within the UHI partnership.

### Scope
The policy applies to all colleges offering further education courses within the UHI partnership, current students seeking to progress their studies and prospective students considering applying.

### Consultation
The policy was endorsed by Partnership Council and was subject to local consultation and approval processes at each academic partner College.

The policy was approved by the College’s Board of Management.

### Implementation and Monitoring
Academic partners will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy. Analysis will be carried out of the policy’s impact by staff from the Vice-Principal for Further Education’s office.

### Risk Implications
The policy reduces risk for the University and academic partners by creating a streamlined process and a community of practice for staff.

Students will also benefit from a consistent approach across all partners.

### Link with Strategy

### Impact Assessment
Equality Impact Assessment: Assessed – No further action to be taken.

Privacy Impact Assessment:
1 Policy Statement

1.1 Lews Castle College UHI endeavours to be welcoming and inclusive in its admissions policy and processes, seeking to work in partnership with prospective students to match applicants with courses most appropriate to their aspirations and current level of skills, knowledge and ability.

1.2 Lews Castle College UHI operates a fair and open admissions process that is free of discrimination and reflects a commitment to widening access and equality of opportunity. The College aims to provide appropriate services to support students with learning support needs or disabilities.

2 Definitions

2.1 If you require assistance or do not understand any terms or language used in this policy, please do not hesitate to contact the Admissions Office.

3 Purpose

3.1 This Policy is to provide Lews Castle College UHI with a robust framework to:

3.1.1 Follow admissions processes that are free of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity status, ethnicity, religion and/or belief, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

3.1.2 Offer a curriculum aligned to local and regional need and in line with national priorities. Where there is diminished local need or low demand, a course may be amended or withdrawn before it commences. Equally, new courses may be introduced or the number of places on a course increased due to demand;

3.1.3 Publicise courses through a variety of communication channels and in a variety of formats;

3.1.4 Be fair, open and transparent in recruitment and selection processes;

3.1.5 Provide clear and accurate information on available courses, entry requirements and/or selection criteria;

3.1.6 Proactively encourage candidates to declare any disability or additional support need that may create barriers to their success in learning. This declaration enables Lews Castle College UHI to provide appropriate support during the application stage and throughout a student’s course;

3.1.7 Publish on Lews Castle College UHI web-site, details of the annual admissions cycle including when applications will be processed, when interviews take place and offers of places will be made.
3.2 Contextualised Admission

3.2.1 To further our commitment to improving access to education for people from the widest possible range of backgrounds Lews Castle College UHI operates a contextualised admissions policy and processes. This commitment enables the College to form a more complete picture of the characteristics of an individual applicant. To this end, Lews Castle College UHI:

3.2.1.1 Endeavours to take into account an applicant’s background where an application falls short of the standard entry criteria for a course or where there is competition for places;

3.2.1.2 Will provide appropriate levels of support to prospective students who require it throughout the admissions process;

3.2.1.3 Make provision for assessments of additional support required ‘on-course’ during the admissions process;

3.2.1.4 Make reasonable adjustments wherever this is possible.

3.2.2 Lews Castle College UHI particularly welcomes applications from specific priority groups in line with Government priorities and legislation, including:

3.2.2.1 Care experienced and looked after young people;

3.2.2.2 Those living in areas of multiple-deprivation as identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as being the 10% most deprived post-code zones in Scotland;

3.2.2.3 Those whose parents or carers have not accessed education beyond the compulsory school years;

3.2.2.4 Male and female applicants to courses with nationally recognised gender imbalances e.g. males into to care, females in to construction.

3.2.3 Lews Castle College UHI guarantees an interview to those with a care experienced background. To support gender equality, the College also operates a guaranteed interview for specific courses that experience a severe gender imbalance and are included in the College’s Gender Action Plan.

3.2.4 Lews Castle College UHI records all contextualised admissions, showing the number of applicants identified within priority groups, by course and by outcome of application.

3.3 Discretion in making an offer of a place

3.3.1 All offers of places are subject to the College’s discretion. The College reserves the right to reject applications or apply further criteria under particular circumstances such as the following:
3.3.1.1 Previous disciplinary sanctions under the College or University disciplinary procedures or those of other institutions

3.3.1.2 Record of outstanding debt with the College or University

3.3.1.3 They do not meet the entry criteria

3.3.1.4 Unsuccessful at interview

3.3.2 Lews Castle College will:

3.3.2.1 Treat every application on its merits and will remove barriers to participation through making reasonable adjustments. However, there may be occasions when reasonable adjustments are not sufficient to enable participation on a particular course. In these circumstances, Lews Castle College will make every effort to offer an alternative course or an alternative mode of study if appropriate and/or available.

3.3.2.2 Reserve the right to apply additional entry criteria in instances where an applicant has a record of previous enrolments without successful completion. In such cases, due consideration will be given to an individual’s circumstances and support needs when reaching a decision.

3.3.2.3 Successful applicants to courses will be required to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG) where the studies or placements require interaction with children and/or vulnerable adults. A previous criminal record does not, in the majority of cases, exclude an applicant from being offered a place. However, the College recognises that it has a duty of care to all students and staff and therefore reserves the right not to admit an applicant where there is evidence that they could affect the safety and welfare of students or staff. The College has the right to withdraw an offer of place if new information becomes available which has not been previously disclosed by the applicant and which could affect the safety and welfare of students and staff.

3.4 Fee Status

3.4.1 Every student who enrols on a course incurs a fee. The vast majority of full-time further education students have their fees paid by the Scottish Funding Council, through the fee waiver system. Part-time students may also be eligible for fee waiver.

3.4.2 On application, the College will make an assessment of fee status in order to determine the appropriate level of tuition fees, in line with the relevant regulations and based on the information provided on the application form. The fee status of an individual will be communicated in the offer letter to ensure that individuals are aware if they are liable to pay fees.
3.4.3 The College reserves the right to change an applicant’s fee status in exceptional circumstances such as the following:

3.4.3.1 If new information becomes available which was not previously disclosed by the applicant and affects the original decision on the fee status;

3.4.3.2 If errors are made within the initial fee assessment, either by the College or by the applicant, which affects the original decision on the fee status.

3.4.4 In such cases, the applicant will be notified of any change to their fee status and any consequences of this change.

3.4.5 Applicants assessed and determined to be international fee-payers may be required to pay full course fees prior to enrolment.

3.5 Appeals

3.5.1 Any appeals relating to application decisions must be made in writing to the Admissions Officer.

3.6 Monitoring

3.6.1 Reports on the number of applications received and offers made will inform curriculum review and courses offered in subsequent years.

3.6.2 Applications will also be monitored by post-code, gender, ethnicity, disability, care experience and carer status to inform equality and diversity action planning.

3.7 Use of Personal Data

3.7.1 Personal data collected through the Lews Castle College UHI admissions process will be anonymised and used for statistical purposes to monitor applications by age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity status, ethnicity, religion and/or belief, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

4 Scope

4.1 This Admissions Policy applies to all applicants for further education courses (full-time and part-time), including those classed as commercial.

4.2 Applicants for higher education courses (HNC, HND, Degree and Post Graduate programmes) should refer to the University of the Highlands and Islands Admissions Policy on the UHI website at: https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/about-uhi/governance/policies-and-regulations/policies/
5 Exceptions

5.1 This policy applies only to Further Education applications.

6 Notification

6.1 Staff responsible for administering the admissions procedures for the College will be briefed and offered training on changes to the policy.

6.2 The policy will be publicly available on the College’s website, along with other current policies.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 The responsibility for compliance with the Admissions Policy lies with all staff involved in the process.

7.2 The Policy will be regularly audited and reports submitted to the Regional Admissions Group.

8 Procedures

8.1 Please refer to the accompanying Further Education Admissions Procedures for details.

9 Legislative Framework

9.1 This policy is aligned with the following legislation:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)
- Scottish Care Leavers Covenant 2015
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (from May 2018)
UHI Further Education Regional Admissions Procedures

The University of the Highlands and Islands operates to a common set of admissions procedures across the partnership. These procedures are set out below:

1. New applicants for further education courses are encouraged to submit applications as early as possible following the opening of the admissions cycle.

2. Applicants are restricted to three full time course applications to be considered at any one time. Staff should check on SITS whether a student has multiple applications, and offer appropriate support if they do.

3. Applications will normally be submitted electronically and will trigger an automated response acknowledging receipt. Applications submitted, by exception manually, will be acknowledged within five working days.

4. Applicants will be advised on the application form that if they have debt to the college or a partner college they may be prevented from enrolment and should contact the college to discuss.

5. All new full time further education students applying during the normal admissions cycle will be interviewed prior to being offered a place.

During application and induction candidates will be given information regarding:

- Course content (including practical/theory balance, project work, work placement, group work, units covered)
- Required attendance patterns (hours per week, noting required hours of independent study, any on-line components, work-placements)
- Assessment requirements (assessment format, individual/group assessments, internally/externally marked, reflective journals, practicals)
- Services to support individuals with additional support needs
- The Highlands and Islands Students Association (HISA)
- The importance of disclosing any additional support needs to enable the college to put in place appropriate support
- Required equipment (college/student responsibilities)
- Information regarding the availability of and application process for student support funding such as bursary funding, Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) funding, discretionary funding, childcare funding and childcare facilities where available
- Potential progression pathways (progression to employment and work)
- Subject-specific curriculum progression pathways
- The wider college facilities

6. For courses beginning in August/September, interviews will be scheduled within six weeks of an application being received, commencing on the third Monday in January of
the proposed entry year. Applications received before January will receive an acknowledgement but may not have an interview scheduled within six weeks.

For courses beginning in January, interviews will be scheduled within six weeks of applications being received.

Interviews for part-time and short courses will be arranged as necessary and appropriate.

7. During the months of July and August, remaining places may be allocated by Admissions Teams in the absence of academic staff where entry criteria have been met.

8. Existing students progressing in the same subject area will complete a Reregistration Form. Existing students going into a new subject area will require to follow the full application process. Progressing students will be supported to reregister in January for new courses starting in August/September.

9. Applications from school pupils seeking to leave school prior to the statutory leaving age to attend college should follow the relevant process agreed with the local authority for offering places.

10. Any candidates who disclose a learner support requirement will receive the support of staff as per the Learner Support Procedures.

11. Candidates will be assessed for their suitability for the course applied for. New personal statement guidance has been provided to applicants. If the applicant submitted a personal statement, this may be used alongside the interview to score the candidate, for example if they include relevant information that is not discussed during the interview.

The assessment will consider four or five ‘clusters’:

- Cluster 1: Course Knowledge
  - Assesses the candidate’s course knowledge and understanding of course content
- Cluster 2: Candidate Ambitions
  - Assesses the candidate’s interest in the subject area and ambitions for an associated career
- Cluster 3: Relevant Experience
  - Assesses the candidate’s qualifications, skills and experience
- Cluster 4: Candidate Suitability
  - Assesses the candidate’s aptitude and compatibility with the learning environment
- Cluster 5: Assessment, Portfolio or Audition (where appropriate)
  - Assesses course-specific skills and ability to learn

12. The interview process may include a practical assessment, portfolio or audition (Cluster 5) to be undertaken either on an individual or group basis. This task will be standard to all applicants for the course. The exception to this may be very late applications where
a decision is required to be made by Admissions Teams in the absence of academic staff where entry criteria are met.

13. The Interview Record form will be used to record the outcome of all interviews.

14. Standard interview questions will be used in the interview, as set out in the Interview Questions document. Curriculum staff may add to these, asking additional specific questions of all candidates. Where this is the case, additional questions asked will be recorded and passed to the Admissions Team.

15. Interviewers will award the candidates a score of 0-5 for each cluster. Guidance for interviewers on how to assess a candidate’s response is available on the Interview Record form.

16. Candidates will be given a score out of 20 regardless of whether 4 or 5 clusters of questions are used. This is achieved by multiplying a score out of 25 by 0.8.

17. Interviewers will then make a decision on whether to make an unconditional offer, a conditional offer or not to offer a place. When a course is fully subscribed, a place may be offered on a waiting list.

18. Where a place is not offered, the evidence generated to support the decision will be recorded on the Interview Record form and returned to the Admissions Team. If a candidate is not offered a place, information will be sent to them about the College’s support services and the appeals process.

19. Outcome letters should be issued to students within five to ten working days after the application has been determined.

20. Applicants have a right to appeal against the outcome of their application. As per the outcome letters, applicants must state the grounds for appeal within ten working days of receiving the letter. Decisions regarding appeals will be determined and notified to applicants within ten working days of receipt of appeal. These timelines will be strictly adhered to in all but exceptional circumstances.

21. Where there is high competition for places on a course, or candidates achieve similar scores, candidate performance in the clusters will be weighted as follows:

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<tr>
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<th>Weighting for Four Clusters</th>
<th>Weighting for Five Clusters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Knowledge</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Ambitions</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Experience</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Suitability</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment, Portfolio or Audition</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
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The Weightings Calculator spreadsheet available to staff in the Admissions Resources should be used where necessary.

22. The University of the Highlands and Islands is committed to widening access and encourages applications from prospective students with the following characteristics:
- Care experienced
- Student carers
- Ethnic minority groups
- Students with disabilities
- A home address in zones identified by SIMD 10 categorisation as areas of multiple deprivation (these addresses will be flagged in SITS) (Forthcoming)
- Gender category that addresses gender imbalance in specific curriculum areas (these courses will be flagged in SITS) (Forthcoming)

Where candidates disclose any of the characteristics listed above, interviewers should pay particular attention to the application as further support may be required. Guidance is available in the Admissions Policy (Further Education) SharePoint site.

23. The colleges are required to provide reasonable adjustments in certain circumstances where a student or prospective student would otherwise be disadvantaged by a provision, criterion or practice operated by the college. Where an applicant highlights a learner support need, arrangements should be made to support the student’s needs from the point of application. Please refer to the Learner Support Policy and Procedures for further information.

24. Where candidates have indicated that they have care experience or are care leavers, they will be provided with pre-entry information regarding supportive arrangements that can be provided should they wish to access these, in line with our corporate parenting responsibilities.

25. Where interviewers determine that a candidate may require English language testing, the applicant will be signposted to information on language testing. It is the applicant’s responsibility to arrange the test and pay for any associated fees.

26. All places are offered at the discretion of the college, and exceptional circumstances such as previous expulsions, suspensions and the outcomes of Protecting Vulnerable Group (PVG) Scheme membership applications may influence the college’s decision.

27. Courses that require PVG Scheme membership are clearly advertised. Applicants to a course that requires PVG Scheme membership will receive a factsheet in their Invitation to Interview letter. Applicants can also ask staff any questions about PVG Scheme Membership at their interview.

28. PVG Scheme membership applications will normally take place at the start of a course. Should anything arise in the PVG Scheme application that may affect a student’s ability
to complete part of the course, they will be contacted by an appropriate member of staff to discuss their options at the earliest opportunity.

29. Further Education students are not expected to pay for their PVG Scheme applications.