



UK Quality Code for Higher Education

**Part B: Assuring and Enhancing
Academic Quality**

**Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and
Admission to Higher Education**

PART
B

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About the Quality Code

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers.¹ It makes clear what higher education providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what students and the general public can expect of them. The Quality Code covers all four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and all providers of UK higher education operating internationally. It protects the interests of all students, regardless of where they are studying or whether they are full-time, part-time, undergraduate or postgraduate students.

The Quality Code has three Parts. Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards contains three Chapters and seven Expectations. Each of the 11 Chapters of Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, and Part C: Information About Higher Education Provision contain a single Expectation. An Expectation expresses the key principle that the higher education community has identified as essential for the assurance of academic standards and quality within the area covered by the respective Chapter or Part. Higher education providers reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) are required to meet all the Expectations. The manner in which they do so is their own responsibility. QAA carries out reviews to check whether higher education providers are meeting the Expectations.²

The Expectations in Part C and each Chapter of Part B are accompanied by a series of Indicators that reflect sound practice, and through which providers can demonstrate they are meeting the relevant Expectation. Indicators are not designed to be used as a checklist; they are intended to help providers reflect on and develop their regulations, procedures and practices to demonstrate that the Expectations in the Quality Code are being met. Each Indicator is supported by an explanatory note that gives more information about it, together with examples of how the Indicator may be interpreted in practice. Indicators are grouped into clusters under a heading. There are no Indicators in Part A. The explanatory text provided directly supports the relevant Expectation.

Each Part and Chapter has been developed by QAA through an extensive process of consultation with higher education providers; their representative bodies; the National Union of Students; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and other interested parties.

*The UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*³ should be considered in conjunction with this document. It provides a technical introduction for users, including guidance concerning the terminology used and a quick-reference glossary. A more detailed glossary is available on QAA's website.⁴

The Quality Code and legislation

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Part or Chapter where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.

Equality and diversity in the Quality Code

The Quality Code promotes an inclusive approach by embedding consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, irrespective of the group or groups to which they belong, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, for example, because of a declared disability, specific cultural background, location or age, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in and responsibility for promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of

inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary. Offering an equal opportunity to learn is distinguished from every student having an equal chance of success, because this is dependent on a range of factors including their motivation and engagement in learning.

All higher education providers have legal obligations which they must meet, for example in relation to equality of opportunity and eliminating unlawful discrimination (in the UK particular considerations, such as the anticipatory duty to provide reasonable adjustments, apply to disabled students). The Quality Code does not seek to duplicate or interpret these requirements.

About this Chapter

This publication forms a Chapter of the Quality Code. It incorporates and supersedes the *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education (Code of Practice), Section 10: Admissions to Higher Education (2006)* published by QAA. More information about recruitment, selection and admission to research degrees can be found in *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*.

This Chapter was subject to public consultation between June and August 2013. The final version of the Chapter was published in October 2013 and became a reference point for the purposes of reviews from August 2014.

Introduction: Recruitment, selection and admission

This Chapter focuses on the interconnected policies and procedures related to the recruitment, selection and admission of students to higher education. It offers a framework for assuring quality, and provides guidance to higher education providers and those involved in recruitment, selection and admission. Concerns about recruitment, selection and admission to higher education become matters of public debate from time to time and this Chapter provides information for the general public about what constitutes sound practice in this respect. It will also be helpful to prospective students and their advisers, and current students who are considering whether to undertake further studies.

Fair admission

Sound practice in recruitment, selection and admission to higher education, as described in this Chapter, is underpinned by the 'principles of fair admissions', or 'Schwartz principles', first set out in *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice* (2004) (the *Schwartz Report*).

Reviews undertaken by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) in 2008 and 2011 have affirmed the continuing validity of the Schwartz principles, and provide evidence that they have been successfully adopted by higher education providers.

Although the *Schwartz Report* focused on the undergraduate experience, this Chapter applies the Schwartz principles to recruitment, selection and admission at all levels in UK higher education and for all modes of study, regardless of context or legal or market conditions.

The five 'Schwartz principles' state that a fair admissions system should:

- be transparent
- enable higher education providers to select students who are able to complete the programme as judged by their achievements and their potential
- strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid
- seek to minimise barriers for prospective students
- be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes.

These principles are embedded in the Chapter Expectation and are fundamental to the Chapter as a whole. They are referred to in this Chapter as the 'principles of fair admission', to reflect their application across all areas of recruitment, selection and admission in higher education.

This Chapter works on the basis that, while all the principles of fair admission are important, the first principle of transparency is of paramount importance to the recruitment, selection and admission context, where the drivers of change can lie outside the direct control of individual higher education providers and their staff, who may find themselves trying to balance the principles with the implications of new legislative and regulatory requirements. Adherence to the principle of transparency ensures that all those engaged in recruitment, selection and admission are able to act with integrity and professionalism in all circumstances.

The scope of this Chapter

For the purposes of this Chapter, recruitment, selection, and admission includes:

- recruitment activities to help prospective students make informed decisions about whether they wish to undertake study within higher education and, if so, where, how and what they might wish to study

- policies and procedures employed by higher education providers to select suitably qualified prospective students for particular programmes
- providers' decision-making processes and their subsequent communication with both successful and unsuccessful prospective students
- ways in which providers support those who receive and accept offers of a place to make the transition from prospective student to current student.

Consideration of recruitment activities is restricted to activities targeted at individuals who are actively weighing up the prospect of entering or continuing in higher education. It does not include broader outreach activities undertaken by higher education providers as part of their strategy and mission, often targeted at children, adolescents and groups that are under-represented in various higher education contexts. The primary purpose of these activities is to raise aspirations and awareness rather than to recruit to a specific provider.

The post-admission boundary within this Chapter is set at the point at which a prospective student registers/enrols with a higher education provider and becomes a current student. Guidance about induction of new students is provided in *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*.

This Chapter therefore covers appeals and complaints about recruitment, selection and admission. Appeals and complaints made by students after registration/enrolment are covered in *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*.

The selection processes and procedures employed by higher education providers addressed within this Chapter include the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of meeting entry requirements for a programme. Recognition of prior learning to facilitate entry with advanced standing to a programme or in order to gain exemption from part of a programme is covered in *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and Recognition of Prior Learning*.

The structure of this Chapter

The Indicators of sound practice and explanatory notes in this Chapter illustrate ways in which the Expectation concerning recruitment, selection and admission to higher education may be met by all higher education providers. The Indicators are organised under two headings.

The first cluster describes an effective basis for recruitment, selection and admission, and addresses the process as a whole. Each Indicator under this heading is applicable at every stage throughout the recruitment, selection and admission process.

The Indicators in the second cluster deal with each of the stages of the recruitment, selection and admission process. They follow the prospective student life cycle: thinking about higher education, applying to higher education, going through the selection process, receiving the decision and feedback, and making the transition from prospective student to current student. While these Indicators are listed in a linear manner, it is recognised that by no means all higher education recruitment, selection and admission engagements follow such a linear path.

Terminology

Prospective student. This term refers to all those who are applying or considering applying for any programme, at any level and employing any mode of study, with a higher education provider.

Current student. This term refers to students who are registered/enrolled on any programme, at undergraduate or postgraduate level, with a higher education provider. An individual becomes a 'current student' at the point of registration/enrolment.

Contextual data and information. Data and information that enable higher education providers to put attainment in the context of the circumstances in which it was obtained, for example educational, geo-demographic and socio-economic background data.

External links

Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative lists of further guidance, references and resources. QAA takes no responsibility for the content of external websites.

Further guidelines, references and resources

Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group (2004) *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice*

www.admissions-review.org.uk/downloads/finalreport.pdf

Higher Education Academy, International Student Lifecycle Resource Bank

www.heacademy.ac.uk/international-student-lifecycle

National Union of Students, Postgraduate applicant advice

www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/postgraduate-study

SPA (2008) Schwartz Report on Fair Admissions: Review

www.spa.ac.uk/information/fairadmissions/schwartzreportreview

SPA (2012) Fair Admissions Task and Finish Group

<http://www.spa.ac.uk/information/fairadmissions/fairadmissionstaskan>

SPA, Information on the applicant Experience

www.spa.ac.uk/support/applicantexperience

SPA, Example schedule for embedding the Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*

www.spa.ac.uk/information/qaaqualitycodeb2

SPA (2013) *Contextualising Admissions: Examining the Evidence Report*

<http://www.spa.ac.uk/information/contextualdata/spasworkoncontextual/cdresearch2013/>

UCAS, Admissions explained

www.ucas.com/members-providers/undergraduate

UCAS, The application cycle

www.ucas.com/members-providers/undergraduate/application-cycle

Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about recruitment, selection and admission to higher education, which higher education providers are required to meet.

Recruitment, selection, and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Indicators of sound practice

The basis for effective recruitment, selection and admission

Indicator 1

Recruitment, selection, and admission policies are informed by the strategic priorities of the higher education provider. Higher education providers promote a shared understanding of their approach among all those involved in recruitment, selection, and admission.

The diversity of UK higher education providers is reflected in their different missions and the range of higher education provision they offer. Each provider determines and sets out its strategic approach to recruitment, selection and admission in light of its context.

Policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission are transparent and explicit. They articulate the values underpinning the provider's processes and clarify where authority and responsibility for each stage lies. They stipulate which bodies or individuals have authority for deciding upon:

- the number of prospective students to whom a place can be offered, where a limited total number of places is available
- securing a good match between the achievements and potential of prospective students and the demands of programmes
- setting transparent and justifiable criteria for selection
- making judgments about relative potential where there is a diverse population of prospective students
- staff training and development
- monitoring and review of policies and procedures.

Policies and procedures make provision for the equitable treatment of a diverse body of prospective students, which includes proper consideration of prospective students' protected characteristics where there may be risk of disadvantage, and guidelines for making reasonable adjustments at various stages in the process.

Higher education providers that use contextual data and information in recruitment, selection and admission are open and transparent about what data and information are being used, for what purposes and with what intended outcomes.

Higher education providers ensure that those involved with recruitment, selection and admission are familiar with policies and procedures and can access them easily. This may include staff involved in recruitment, selection and admission activity, prospective students, and their advisers. Providers produce information for their intended audiences in a range of formats and communicate it in various forms according to the audiences' particular needs.

For guidance on engaging students in aspects of recruitment, selection and admission as part of quality enhancement and assurance processes, see *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*.

Where degree-awarding bodies are working with other delivery organisations, support providers or partners, the written agreements between the parties specify which of them is responsible for the

management of recruitment, selection and admission processes or how responsibilities are shared (see *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*).

Further guidelines, references and resources

Academic Registrars Council, Admissions Practitioner Group - Resource for practitioners
www.arc.ac.uk/practitioner-1-Admissions.html

Action on Access, *Disability Focus Guide Admissions*
http://actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files_mf/admissionsdisabilityguide2.pdf

Action on Access (2008) *University Admissions and Vocational Qualifications*
http://actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files_mf/universityadmissionsvocationalqualifications.pdf

British Council, 2013 Education UK guides
www.educationuk.org/UK/Article/GB1262439220589

Equality Challenge Unit (2012) *Equitable Admissions for Underrepresented Groups*
<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/equitable-admissions-for-underrepresented-groups>

Higher Education Liaison Officers Association, Good Practice Guidelines
www.heloa.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/HELOA-Good-Practice-Guidelines.pdf

The Scottish Parliament (2011) *Widening Access to Higher Education: Admissions*
www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S3/SB_11-07.pdf

SPA, Guidance on the use of contextual data
www.spa.ac.uk/information/contextualdata

SPA, Good practice advice on admissions policies
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/admissionspolicies

SPA (2010) *Principles for the Use of Contextual Data in Admissions*
www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ContextualData/Principles_for_the_use_of_contextual_data.docx

UK Border Agency (UKBA), *Studying in the UK - Guidance*
www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying

UKBA (2013) *Tier 4 of the Points Based System - Policy Guidance*
www.gov.uk/government/publications/studying-under-tier-4-of-the-points-based-system

Indicator 2

Recruitment, selection and admission processes are conducted in a professional manner by authorised and competent representatives of the higher education provider.

The roles and responsibilities attached to all stages of recruitment, selection and admission are identified by higher education providers and communicated clearly to all those involved. The knowledge, skills, and experience required to operate each stage are specified in the appropriate documentation and the provider ensures that those carrying responsibility for recruitment, selection and admission have up to date knowledge, are appropriately trained and are sufficiently experienced to carry out their respective roles.

Higher education providers are vigilant to ensure that all those authorised to make decisions on behalf of the provider about whether or not a place should be offered to an prospective student are fully briefed, and competent to do so. This includes ensuring that those making decisions are equipped to counteract the potential for bias that can arise from educational and cultural differences and are able to recognise the potential of prospective students seeking to enter higher education via a variety of different routes.

Those authorised to make such decisions may work within or outside of the higher education provider, nationally or internationally. Higher education providers contracting the services of external education agents undertake due diligence during the appointment of those agents, and make all reasonable efforts to ensure that they are reputable and competent in UK higher education advising.

Chapter B11: Research Degrees provides further guidance regarding the staff responsible for recruitment, selection and admission of research degree students.

The professionalism of those involved in recruitment, selection and admission may be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including:

- considerate and timely interactions with prospective students and their advisers
- transparent, efficient and effective communication with other interested parties
- thorough checking of applications to ensure that prospective students meet the necessary entry requirements, including those specified by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)
- the ability to devise ways of enabling prospective students from a range of different backgrounds to demonstrate their potential to succeed in their studies
- signposting to additional advice and guidance
- commitment to training, continuing professional development (CPD) or professional development.

Higher education providers safeguard prospective student data and assure the confidentiality of personal data provided by prospective students during recruitment, selection and admission processes, particularly with regard to data sharing and setting time limits on data retention.

Further guidelines, references and resources

Association of University Administrators, Professional Behaviours
<http://cpdframework.aua.ac.uk/professional-behaviours>

Association of University Administrators, CPD Framework
<http://cpdframework.aua.ac.uk>

Association of University Administrators, Special Interest Group, Applicant Experience
www.aua.ac.uk/pigroups-1-Applicant-Experience.html

British Council, Guide to good practice for education agents
www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-agents-good-practice-htm

HELOA, Training
www.heloa.ac.uk/training

QAA (2012), *International Students Studying in the UK: Guidance for UK Higher Education Providers*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=114

SPA (2011) *Interviewing Applicants for Admission to University and College Courses or Programmes: Good Practice Statement*
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/interviews

UCAS, Continuing Professional Development Programme
www.ucas.com/members-providers/training-and-support/training/continuing-professional-development

Indicator 3

Higher education providers have procedures for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment, selection and admission that are fair and accessible. Appeals and complaints procedures are conducted expeditiously and in accordance with a published timescale.

Within this Chapter, a complaint about recruitment, selection and admission is the expression of a particular concern about a procedure or administrative process and can be lodged at any stage of recruitment, selection and admission. An appeal is defined as a request for a review of a decision concerning selection or admission and can be lodged only after such a decision has been made.

When determining their policies and procedures for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment, selection and admission, higher education providers may consider in the first instance whether, and if so how, their general appeals and complaints policies and procedures might be applied to recruitment, selection and admission (see *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*).

When determining the timescale for handling appeals and complaints, higher education providers consider the need to allow prospective students time to pursue their next course of action within the application process, if appropriate. The timescale for handling appeals and complaints is communicated to prospective students at the earliest possible point.

Information is produced for prospective students that explains clearly the grounds on which they may lodge an appeal against any decision and those matters about which they are not able to lodge an appeal. For example, some higher education providers may not allow appeals based on academic judgment but may be prepared to consider those based on procedural grounds.

Higher education providers routinely publish information about the processes for complaints and appeals in recruitment, selection, and admission, which provides transparent guidance about how those wishing to make a complaint or appeal may do so.

Higher education providers draw attention to their appeals and complaints procedures at the earliest appropriate opportunity in the recruitment, selection and admission process, and decide how they record and monitor the receipt and outcomes of appeals and complaints.

Higher education providers seek opportunities for the early and/or informal resolution of complaints and appeals, while ensuring that prospective students understand the link between such early or informal processes and formal processes

Further guidelines, references and resources

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman, Complaints Standards Authority for Scotland, Further and Higher Education

www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/further-and-higher-education

SPA (2012) Good Practice Statement on Applicant Complaints and Appeals

www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/complaintsandappeals

Indicator 4

Higher education providers monitor, review and update their recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures, in order to enhance them and to ensure that they continue to support the provider's mission and strategic objectives. Higher education providers determine the frequency with which monitoring and review are undertaken.

Monitoring and review enable higher education providers to evaluate the operation of recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures in light of changing patterns in supply and demand, legislative and regulatory changes, and the prior qualifications presented by prospective students.

Analysis of recruitment, selection and admission data, considered alongside data such as progression and retention rates of students, withdrawal and transfer, and reasons for non-completion, assists higher education providers in evaluating the extent to which their recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures are supporting their mission and the achievement of their strategic objectives.

Monitoring and review help to promote greater consistency between subjects, departments and faculties as well as between programmes provided solely by the degree-awarding body and those operating through arrangements between degree-awarding bodies and other delivery organisations, support providers or partners.

Further guidelines, references and resources

AMOSSHE, The Student Services Organisation, Value & Impact Toolkit
www.amoshe.org/viptoolkit

Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland, Statistics, Higher Education
www.delni.gov.uk/higher-education-stats

Higher Education Funding Council for England, Policy Guide, Student Numbers and High Grades
www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/howfund/studentgrades

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Statistics
www.hefcw.ac.uk/about_he_in_wales/statistics/statistics.aspx

Higher Education Statistics Agency, Statistics and Qualifiers at UK HE Destinations
www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1897/239

Scottish Funding Council, Statistics
www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/statistics.aspx

SPA (2012) *Supporting Professionalism in Admissions - Considerations for Planning and Managing Admissions*
www.spa.ac.uk/documents/PlanningandManagingAdmissions/SPAconsiderations_planningmanagingadmissions.pdf

SPA, Information on data and statistics
www.spa.ac.uk/information/dataandstatistics

UCAS, Statistics online
www.ucas.com/data-analysis

Stages of the recruitment, selection and admission process

Thinking about higher education

Indicator 5

Recruitment activities undertaken by higher education providers assist prospective students in making informed decisions about higher education.

Promotional material and events designed to attract and inform prospective students give a fair and accurate reflection of the higher education provider and the student experience it offers.

Higher education providers focus on producing materials and arranging activities for prospective students that tell them about the options offered by the provider and assist them in reaching an informed decision.

Providers decide what information they will make available and how it can be communicated most effectively to the diverse range of prospective students and their advisers. Such information may include:

- details of the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of meeting entry requirements
- details of flexible learning opportunities
- information about child care
- advice about the proportion of Welsh-language teaching available
- information about where teaching for a programme is located, when this takes place across different campuses, across different delivery organisations, support providers or partners, or via a range of media.

Prospective students may be given opportunities to gather further information about a programme or to visit the higher education provider, for example at undergraduate or postgraduate open days.

Information is published about all the fees and other costs of study that might apply to each programme. Information is also published about financial support available for students. Details of, and eligibility criteria for, academic scholarships, needs-based bursaries, and, where applicable, loans, are accessible and transparent so that prospective students can make comparisons and informed decisions about the cost of higher education at different higher education providers and for different programmes of study.

Further guidance on providing information for prospective students can be found in Part C of the Quality Code: Information about Higher Education Provision. Further guidance on providing information for prospective research degree students can be found in *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*.

Higher education providers support prospective students' advisers to help them research their options. This may include, for example, providing information in good time for course search databases or providing guidance or staff development for advisers, agents and those working in school or college liaison.

Further guidelines, references and resources

HEFCW (2010) Provision of Information for Students on Cost of Study

www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/w10%2007he%20provision%20of%20information%20for%20students%20on%20costs%20of%20study.pdf

HELOA, Training

www.heloa.ac.uk/training

MoneySavingExpert.com - Student Finance

www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes

Prospects Postgraduate course search

[www.prospects.ac.uk/search_courses.htm?](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/search_courses.htm?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=nus_web&utm_campaign=august2012)

[utm_source=partner&utm_medium=nus_web&utm_campaign=august2012](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/search_courses.htm?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=nus_web&utm_campaign=august2012)

SPA (2009) Pre-application recommendations

www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ApplicantExperience/SPA_Pre-application_recommendations.pdf

Student Loans Company

www.slc.co.uk

UCAS, Continuing Professional Development Programme

www.ucas.com/members-providers/training-and-support/training/continuing-professional-development

UCAS, Course Search

<http://search.ucas.com>

UCAS, Student Finance

www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/student-finance

Unistats, Compare official course data from universities and colleges

<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>

Unistats, The Key Information Set

<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/find-out-more/key-information-set>

Applying to higher education

Indicator 6

Higher education providers make clear to prospective students how the recruitment, selection and admission process will be conducted and what prospective students have to do.

Higher education providers' policies and procedures for applying to higher education are transparent and accessible. The policies and procedures assist prospective students in completing and submitting their application in full by the given deadline, to the satisfaction of the provider.

The information provided to prospective students informs them about what the application and selection process involves, how long this process takes, any key milestones in the process, and any expected communications between the higher education provider and the prospective student.

Higher education providers explain why information is requested from prospective students, whether this is optional or mandatory, and how such information is used. For example, higher education providers wishing to support disabled prospective students may encourage them to consider disclosing disabilities early in

the application process so that arrangements can be made in good time for specialist support from the higher education provider. A similar approach may be taken where prospective students have responsibilities as carers.

Providers make clear and explicit statements about both academic and non-academic requirements for admission and success in a particular programme. Such requirements may include:

- those made by PSRBs or sponsoring bodies
- immigration and English language requirements for international students
- occupational health requirements.

Where providers ask for external tests (for example language assessments, the BioMedical Admissions Test, or the National Admissions Test for Law) it is explained how information about these tests should be submitted, and how this information is used in the selection process.

Providers notify prospective students about any additional criteria to be considered in the selection process. For example, criminal record checks may be required for programmes involving access to children or vulnerable adults, and medical or criminal record checks may be required by some PSRBs. The significance of this information to the selection decision is openly explained to prospective students at the earliest appropriate point.

Where fees are charged or deposits taken during the admissions process, higher education providers explain what precisely is covered by the fee or deposit and the circumstances under which it might be refunded. Records are kept regarding fees and deposits paid by prospective students.

Further guidelines, references and resources

Data Protection Act 1998

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents

The Equality Act 2010 (Disability Regulations) 2010

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2128/contents/made

Access to Higher Education, Policies and publications

www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/Default.aspx

Action on Access, Disability Focus Guide Admissions

http://actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files_mf/admissionsdisabilityguide2.pdf

ECU (2012) Equitable Admissions for Underrepresented Groups

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/equitable-admissions-for-underrepresented-groups

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (2012) Mentor Guidance Pack

www.scqf.org.uk/content/files/resources/SSSC_RPL_Mentor_Guidance_Pack.pdf

SPA, Good practice advice on admissions policies

www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/admissionspolicies

SPA, Guidance on vocational Qualifications

www.spa.ac.uk/support/qualifications/vocationalqualificat/

SPA (2010) SPA Application Recommendations

www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ApplicantExperience/SPA_Application_recommendations.pdf

UCAS, Application calendar for all applications (via the UCAS Scheme)

www.ucas.com/providers/undergraduate/undergraduate-application-process/adjustment

Going through the selection process

Indicator 7

Selection processes for entry into higher education are underpinned by transparent entry requirements, both academic and non-academic, and present no unnecessary barriers to prospective students.

Decisions about selecting students are made by autonomous higher education providers. A range of evidence may be considered when determining the potential of prospective students to succeed on a particular programme. Higher education providers may decide that different selection criteria should be employed for different programmes and may use a variety of sources of academic and non-academic evidence. They assure themselves that the methods they use to gather evidence about prospective students are inclusive and fit for purpose.

Necessary barriers might include:

- subject-specific knowledge
- competence standards
- graded performance in previous relevant qualifications
- genuine occupational requirements
- visa restrictions
- application deadline dates
- or the number of places available for a particular programme.

Unnecessary barriers to prospective students might include:

- graded performance in previous qualifications that are of no direct relevance to the programme in question
- or fixed interview dates that do not consider individuals' circumstances or religious beliefs.

Where the selection of students uses information not captured on the application form, such as interviews, auditions, additional tests, or portfolios, higher education providers explain openly to prospective students what these selection tools entail, why they are being used and the contribution they make to the selection decision, while maintaining the right to exercise academic judgment in selection.

Further guidance on selection processes for research degrees is available in *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*.

In assessing achievement and potential to succeed, or in differentiating between prospective students with broadly equivalent knowledge, skills and experience (including recognition of prior learning), higher education providers give careful consideration to the different ways in which required or desirable characteristics might be demonstrated, and the variety of ways in which learning can take place. For example, learning can be experiential (for example, acquired through the workplace) as well as formal.

Further guidelines, references and resources

Office of Qualifications and Exam Regulations, Qualification Frameworks
<http://ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-frameworks>

NARIC International Qualifications comparison
<http://ecctis.co.uk/naric/Default.aspx>

UKBA, Tier 4 Guidance for Higher Education Providers
www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/business-sponsors/education-providers

Access to HE (2012) *Approaches to Setting Entry Requirements and Conditional Offers*
www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/Guidelines-HE-admissions-setting-entry-requirements-and-offers-12-13.aspx

British Council - Education UK, Entry requirements for UK study
www.educationuk.org/UK/Article/Entry-requirements-for-UK-study

SPA, Admissions Tests Good Practice Guidance
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/admissionstests

SPA, Entry Profiles, Good Practice Guidance
www.spa.ac.uk/support/qualifications/entryprofiles

SPA, Guidance on planning and managing admissions
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/planningandmanaginga

SPA (2011) Good practice in interviewing applicants for admission to HE
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/interviews

Receiving the decision and feedback

Indicator 8

Higher education providers determine how decisions and the reasons for those decisions are recorded and conveyed to prospective students.

Higher education providers ensure that procedures for recording and justifying selection decisions are systematically and consistently operated providing a sound basis for communication of the decision and the provision of feedback to prospective students. Higher education providers make clear to prospective students on what terms, if any, feedback is provided.

Offers of a place are accompanied by information about the procedures prospective students need to follow to accept or turn down the offer, as well as transparent and explicit procedures and criteria for requesting that the offer be deferred, enabling the prospective student to postpone enrolling/registering as a current student for a specified time. Where prospective students have to fulfil certain conditions to secure a place, there is explicit information about the actions they should take if they do not achieve the results and/or meet the criteria specified in the offer of a place.

To assist successful prospective students in making informed and timely decisions about the offer they have received, higher education providers consider the extent, format and timing of information and guidance they make available to prospective students, once an offer of a place has been made.

Higher education providers give prospective students sufficient time and the information they need to consider their options.

Higher education providers give careful consideration to how they inform prospective students that their application has been unsuccessful. Higher education providers determine the nature and extent of feedback to be made available to unsuccessful prospective students, whether such feedback is available routinely or on request only and whether there are time limits to requesting feedback. Providers consider the extent to which they are able to offer advice to unsuccessful prospective students about alternative options within different programmes of study.

Further guidelines, references and resources

SPA (2011) *Post-application Recommendations*

www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ApplicantExperience/SPA_Post-application_recommendations.pdf

SPA (2012) Good Practice: Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants

www.spa.ac.uk/documents/Feedback/Feedback_to_Unsuccessful_Applicants_Good_Practice_Dec2012.docx

Indicator 9

Higher education providers inform prospective students, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes to a programme to which they have applied. Prospective students are advised promptly of the options available in the circumstances.

From time to time, higher education providers may find it necessary to make changes to a programme between the time prospectuses are published or offers are made to prospective students and the time when enrolment/registration of current students has been completed.

Changes may be due to alterations to the accreditation status, cost or location of a programme; due to a programme being suspended or discontinued; or due to decisions made by a degree-awarding body, where a programme is provided by another delivery organisation, support provider or partner. Changes may also result from staff becoming unavailable, for example, where a Welsh-speaking member of staff leaves, meaning that a programme can only be offered through the medium of English, or where a research supervisor leaves.

In such circumstances, higher education providers inform prospective students at the earliest opportunity of any significant changes and ensure that they are advised of the options available to them, which may include applying to a different programme at the same provider or applying to a different provider altogether.

Further guidelines, references and resources

SPA (2009) Good practice statement on admissions policies

www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/admissionspolicies

Making the transition from prospective student to current student

Indicator 10

Higher education providers give successful applicants sufficient information to enable them to make the transition from prospective student to current student.

Higher education providers determine what information and/or activities will best enable prospective students to begin their studies with an understanding of the environment in which they will be working. They ensure that the timing and nature of any information or activities provided is appropriate and relevant to the diverse needs of prospective students, including part-time and newly arriving international students, and that arrangements are in place for every student regardless of start date.

For example, prospective part-time students with commitments outside study time may find it useful to know about indicative attendance requirements; distance-learning students may need to know about online enrolment/registration processes, and any technology to which they will need to have access in order to undertake their programme; and international students may be required to attend enrolment/registration earlier and may have additional induction activities.

Wherever possible, information and activities provided enable prospective students to think ahead about the routes or options that they might take during their programme. See *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching* and *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*.

Further guidance on supporting the transition to a research degree is available in *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*.

Further guidelines, references and resources

ECU (2010) Equality Challenge Unit, Managing reasonable adjustments in higher education
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/managing-reasonable-adjustments-in-higher-education.pdf/view?searchterm=ReasonableAdjustment

Higher Education Academy, International student induction
www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/internationalisation/ISL_Induction

International Staff, Induction of students to UKHE
www.internationalstaff.leeds.ac.uk/uploads/Induction%20of%20students%20to%20UKHE%20L&T%20section%202011291.pdf

National Union of Students, Becoming a Student
www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/becoming-a-student

SPA (2011) SPA Transition Recommendations
www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ApplicantExperience/SPA_Transition_recommendations.pdf

Student Loan Company
www.slc.co.uk

Appendix 1 - The Expectation and Indicators Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education

The Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about recruitment, selection and admission which higher education providers are required to meet.

Recruitment, selection, and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

The Indicators of sound practice

Indicator 1

Recruitment, selection, and admission policies are informed by the strategic priorities of the higher education provider. Higher education providers promote a shared understanding of their approach among all those involved in recruitment, selection, and admission.

Indicator 2

Recruitment, selection and admission processes are conducted in a professional manner by authorised and competent representatives of the higher education provider.

Indicator 3

Higher education providers have procedures for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment, selection and admission that are fair and accessible. Appeals and complaints procedures are conducted expeditiously and in accordance with a published timescale.

Indicator 4

Higher education providers monitor, review and update their recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures, in order to enhance them and to ensure that they continue to support the provider's mission and strategic objectives. Higher education providers determine the frequency with which monitoring and review are undertaken.

Indicator 5

Recruitment activities undertaken by higher education providers assist prospective students in making informed decisions about higher education.

Indicator 6

Higher education providers make clear to prospective students how the recruitment, selection and admission process will be conducted and what prospective students have to do.

Indicator 7

Selection processes for entry into higher education are underpinned by transparent entry requirements, both academic and non-academic, and present no unnecessary barriers to prospective students.

Indicator 8

Higher education providers determine how decisions and the reasons for those decisions are recorded and conveyed to prospective students.

Indicator 9

Higher education providers inform prospective students, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes to a programme to which they have applied. Prospective students are advised promptly of the options available in the circumstances.

Indicator 10

Higher education providers give successful applicants sufficient information to enable them to make the transition from prospective student to current student.

Appendix 2 - Membership of the advisory group for this Chapter

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Martyn Annis | Head of Registry/Chair | University of Brighton/ ARC Admissions Practitioner Group |
| David Barrett | Assistant Director | Office for Fair Access |
| Lynda Brady | Director of Learner Support Services | Open University |
| Ruth Burchell | Project Officer | QAA |
| Dr Hywel Davies | Director, Recruitment and Admissions | Aberystwyth University |
| Dr Melinda Drowley | Head of Standards, Quality and Enhancement | QAA (Chair) |
| Nick Entwistle | Research and Policy Officer | National Union of Students |
| Rebecca Gaukroger | Head of Admissions | University of Edinburgh |
| Dr Cathy Kerfoot | Development Officer | QAA |
| Erik Manning | Head of Admissions | Regent's University London |
| Mike Nicholson | Director of Admissions | University of Oxford |
| Liam Owens | Head of Student Recruitment/UK Chair | Edge Hill University/Higher Education Liaison Officers Association |
| Kevin Porter | Deputy Director | Royal College of Music |
| Gemma Prichard | Head of Admissions and Enrolment | University of the Arts London |
| Dan Shaffer | Senior Project Officer | Supporting Professionalism in Admissions |
| Roderick Smith | Director of Admissions | University of Birmingham |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Dr Tessa Stone | Chief Executive | Brightside Trust |
| Helen Thorne | Director of Policy and Research | UCAS |
| Gail Wilson | Development Officer | QAA |
| Dr Anna Mountford-Zimdars | Lecturer in Higher Education | King's College London (specialist writer) |

References

- ¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code
- ² www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education
- ³ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=181
- ⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/AboutUs/glossary

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