



UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality

Chapter B2: Recruitment and admission to higher education

Consultation draft

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Contents

About the Quality Code	1
About this Chapter	1
Recruitment and admission to higher education.....	2
External links	3
Expectation	4
Indicators of sound practice	4
General principles of recruitment and admission	4
Stages of the recruitment and admission cycle.....	8
Thinking about higher education	8
Applying to higher education	10
Going through the selection process	11
Receiving the decision and feedback.....	12
Making the transition from applicant to current student	13
Appendix 1: The Expectation and Indicators	15
The Expectation	15
The Indicators of sound practice.....	15
Appendix 2: Membership of the advisory group for this Chapter	17

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. It makes clear what higher education providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what the general public can expect of them. The Quality Code covers all four nations of the UK and all providers of UK higher education operating overseas. 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.

Each Chapter contains a single Expectation, which 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 Chapter. 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.

Each 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. Higher education providers are also 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 Chapter where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.

The Expectation in each Chapter is 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 numbered and printed in bold and is supported by an explanatory note that gives more information about it, together with examples of how the Indicator may be interpreted in practice.

The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General introduction* 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.

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* (the *Code of practice*), *Section 10: Admissions to higher education* (2006) published by QAA. More information about recruitment and admission to research degrees can be found in *Chapter B11: Research degrees* of the Quality Code.

Recruitment and admission to higher education

This Chapter focuses on the interconnected policies, processes and practices related to the recruitment 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 and admission. Concerns about recruitment 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 potential applicants, prospective students and their advisors, and current students who are considering whether to undertake further studies.

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

- pre-engagement and recruitment activities to help potential applicants make informed decisions about whether they wish to undertake study within higher education and, if so, where, how and what particular programme they might wish to study
- processes and procedures employed by higher education providers to select suitably qualified applicants for particular programmes
- providers' decision-making processes and their subsequent communication with both successful and unsuccessful applicants
- ways in which providers support those who receive and accept offers of a place to make the transition from the role of successful applicant to current student.

Consideration of pre-engagement and 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 enrolls 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 and admission. Appeals and complaints made by students after 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*.

Sound practice in recruitment and admission to higher education, as described in this Chapter, is underpinned by the concept of fair admissions, the definition of which is based on the five principles of fair admissions established in the Schwartz Report, *Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice* (2004), which 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 applicants
- be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes.

While these principles apply to recruitment and admission in all UK higher education provision, regardless of context or legal or market conditions, this Chapter acknowledges that some of the drivers of change affecting recruitment and admission lie outside the control of individual higher education providers and their admissions professionals. It is also recognised that admissions professionals may sometimes find themselves in the front line, testing the implications of new legislative and regulatory requirements. Where changes of this sort threaten to compromise one or more of the principles of fair admissions, adhering firmly to the first principle of transparency ensures that those engaged in recruitment and admission processes are nevertheless able to act with integrity and professionalism.

The Indicators of sound practice and explanatory notes in this Chapter demonstrate ways in which the Expectation concerning recruitment and admission to higher education can be met by all higher education providers. The Indicators are organised under two headings: basis for effective recruitment and admission, and stages of the recruitment and admission cycle. The Indicators in the second cluster follow the applicant life cycle, addressing pre-application engagement, application, selection, communicating selection decisions, and transition from acceptance to enrolment. While these Indicators are listed in a linear manner, it is recognised that by no means all higher education recruitment and admission engagements follow such a linear path.

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

Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, Schwartz Report on Fair Admissions: Review

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

SPA, Applicant Experience

www.spa.ac.uk/support/applicantexperience

UCAS, A guide to our procedures

www.ucas.ac.uk/he_staff/admissionsexplained

UCAS, Six Steps for applicants

www.ucas.com/he_staff/admissionsexplained/outline/sixsteps

National Union of Students (NUS), Postgraduate applicant Advice

www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/careers/postgraduate/applying-for-postgrad-study

Higher Education Academy (HEA), International Student Lifecycle Resource Bank

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

Expectation

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

Recruitment and admission policies, procedures and practices are accessible, explicit and transparent: they are consistently applied and documented resulting in justified and equitable admission practices that adhere to the principles of fair admission.

Indicators of sound practice

General principles of recruitment and admission

Indicator 1

Higher education providers articulate and implement a strategic approach to recruitment and admission: they promote a shared understanding of this approach among all those involved in recruitment and admission processes.

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 and admission in light of its context. Policies and procedures for recruitment and admission are clear, explicit and transparent. They articulate the principles underpinning the provider's practices and clarify where authority and responsibility for each part of the cycle lie. They stipulate which bodies or individuals have authority for: deciding upon the number of applicants to whom a place can be offered relative to the total number of places available; securing a good match between achievements and potential of applicants and the demands of programmes; setting transparent and justifiable criteria for selection; making judgements about relative potential within a diverse population of applicants; staff training and development; and monitoring and review of policies, procedures and practices. Guidance is offered by the provider about how to operate in circumstances where pressure to recruit to target may threaten to compromise the provider's principles, for example during the 'Clearing' period in undergraduate admissions.

Policies and procedures make provision for the equitable treatment of a diverse body of applicants, which includes proper consideration of applicants' protected characteristics and guidelines for making reasonable adjustments at various stages in the cycle.

Contextual data is data that puts attainment in the context of the circumstances in which it was obtained, for example educational, geo-demographic and socio-economic background data. Higher education providers that use contextual data in recruitment and admission processes are open and transparent about what data are being used, for what purposes and with what intended outcomes.

Higher education providers ensure that those involved with recruitment and admission are familiar with policies and procedures and can access them easily. This may include staff involved in recruitment and admission activity, potential applicants, prospective students, and their advisors. Providers produce information for their intended audiences in a range of formats and communicate it in various forms according to their particular needs. The views of prospective and current students, individually and collectively, inform the development of recruitment and admission policies. *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code

contains further guidance on engaging current students in quality assurance and enhancement processes.

Where degree-awarding bodies are working with other partners, delivery organisations or support providers, the written agreements between the parties specify which of them is responsible for the management of recruitment and admission processes or how responsibilities are shared (see also *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*, especially Indicator 14).

Further guidelines, references and resources

SPA, Good practice guidance

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

Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA), Good practice guidelines

www.heloa.ac.uk/resources/HELOA_Good_Practice_Guidelines.pdf

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) (2012) *Equitable admissions for underrepresented groups*

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

Action on Access, *Disability Focus Guide Admissions*

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

SPA, Guidance on the use of contextual data

www.spa.ac.uk/information/contextualdata

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

The Scottish Parliament (2011) *Widening Access to Higher Education: Admissions*

www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S3/SB_11-07.pdf

UK Border Agency (UKBA), *Studying in the UK*

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying

UKBA (2013) *Tier 4 of the Points Based System - Policy Guidance*

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/employersandsponsors/pbsguidance/guidancefrom31mar09/sponsor-guidance-t4-060412.pdf?view=Binary

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

Academic Registrars Council, Admissions Practitioner Group

www.arc.ac.uk/practitioner-1-Admissions.html

Indicator 2

Each stage of the recruitment and admissions cycle is conducted in a professional manner by duly authorised and competent representatives of the higher education provider.

The roles and responsibilities attached to each stage of the recruitment and admission cycle are identified by higher education providers and communicated clearly to all those involved in recruitment and admission. The skills, knowledge and experience required to implement each stage of the cycle are specified in the appropriate documentation and the provider ensures that those carrying responsibility for recruitment and admission have up-to-date knowledge, are appropriately trained and are sufficiently experienced to carry out their respective roles. Particular care is taken to make sure that those authorised to make decisions on behalf of the provider, about whether or not a place should be offered to an applicant, 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 applicants seeking to enter higher education via a variety of different routes.

The professionalism of those involved in recruitment and admission is demonstrated in a variety of ways including: considerate and timely interactions with potential applicants, prospective students and their advisors; 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); and the ability to devise ways of enabling prospective students from a range of different backgrounds to demonstrate their potential to succeed in their studies.

Further guidelines, references and resources

Association of University Administrators (AUA) Code of professional conduct

www.aua.ac.uk

UCAS, Continuing Professional Development Programme

www.ucas.ac.uk/he_staff/training/cpd

AUA, Special Interest Group, Applicant Experience

www.aua.ac.uk/pigroups-1-Applicant-Experience.html

SPA (2011) *Interviewing applicants for admission to university and college courses or programmes: Good practice statement*

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

AUA, CPD Framework

<http://cpdframework.aua.ac.uk>

HELOA, Training

www.heloa.ac.uk/training

Indicator 3

Higher education providers have procedures for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment and admission which are fair, accessible and timely and help providers improve the service they offer.

Within this Chapter, a complaint about recruitment and admission is the expression of a particular concern about a procedure or administrative process and can be lodged at any stage of the recruitment and admission cycle. 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 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 appeals and complaints made with regard to recruitment and admission (see also *Chapter B9: Academic appeals and student complaints*). Information is produced for applicants that explains clearly the grounds on which they may lodge an appeal against any admissions decision and those matters about which they are not able to lodge an appeal.

Higher education providers routinely publish information about complaints and appeals concerning recruitment and admission. They also decide how, and at what stage in the recruitment and admission cycle, they draw attention to their appeals and complaints procedure and how they record and monitor the receipt and outcomes of appeals and complaints. Where possible they offer opportunities for early and/or informal resolution to matters raised while clearly explaining 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 regularly monitor, review and update their recruitment and admission policies, procedures and practices, in order to enhance them and to ensure that they continue to support the provider's mission and strategic objectives.

Monitoring and review enables higher education providers to evaluate the operation of recruitment and admission policies and procedures in light of changing patterns in supply and demand, legislative and regulatory changes, and the qualifications studied by applicants. Analysis of recruitment 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 and admission policies and procedures are supporting their mission and the achievement of their strategic objectives. Monitoring and review activities 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 or support providers. Monitoring and review are evidence-based and undertaken with a view to inform planning and enhance recruitment and admission practices.

Further guidelines, references and resources

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

Higher Education Funding Council, 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

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

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

UCAS, Statistics online
www.ucas.ac.uk/about_us/stat_services/stats_online

UCAS, Information on Student Number Controls, England
www.ucas.ac.uk/students/studentnumbercontrols

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

SPA, Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, Data and Statistics
www.spa.ac.uk/information/dataandstatistics

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

Stages of the recruitment and admission cycle

Thinking about higher education

Indicator 5

Recruitment activity undertaken by higher education providers assists potential applicants in making informed decisions about going to or continuing in higher education and about applying for programmes suited to their interest and skills.

Promotional material and events designed to attract and inform potential applicants give a fair and accurate reflection of the higher education provider and the learning opportunities it offers. Higher education providers focus on producing materials and arranging activities for potential applicants that will tell them about the options available 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 potential applicants and their advisors. This includes information about recognition of prior learning for the purposes of meeting entry requirements. Potential applicants may also be given opportunities to gather further information about a programme or to visit the higher education provider, for example at open days. Information is also produced about fees and other costs of study, as well as

financial support available for students. Information and eligibility criteria for academic scholarships, needs-based bursaries, and, where applicable, loans, are accessible and transparent so that potential applicants can make comparisons and informed decisions about the cost of higher education at different higher education providers and for different programmes of study. Further detail can be found in Part C: Information about higher education provision of the Quality Code.

Higher education providers pro-actively support students' advisors to help potential applicants and prospective students research their options. This may include, for example, providing timely information for course search databases or providing guidance or CPD events for advisors, agents and those working in school liaison.

Further guidelines, references and resources

HELOA, Training

www.heloa.ac.uk/training

UCAS, Continuing Professional Development Programme

www.ucas.ac.uk/he_staff/training/cpd

UCAS, Course Search

www.ucas.ac.uk/students/coursesearch

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>

UCAS, Student Finance

www.ucas.ac.uk/students/studentfinance

MoneySavingExpert.com

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

Student Loans Company

www.slc.co.uk

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

Prospects Postgraduate course search

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

Applying to higher education

Indicator 6

Higher education providers handle applications professionally, consistently and expeditiously keeping applicants informed throughout the process.

Policies and procedures for applying to higher education providers are accessible and written in a way that is clear to prospective students. They take into account equality and diversity issues, including declared disabilities of applicants, and remove or minimise potential barriers to access. As part of the process of implementing policies and procedures, providers determine how and when entry requirements and selection criteria and processes will be communicated to applicants and all those contributing to decisions about admission.

Where fees are charged during the admissions process, higher education providers explain what precisely is covered by the fee and the circumstances under which a fee might be refunded. Records are kept regarding fees paid by individual applicants.

Higher education providers may receive applications from a range of sources, including those submitted via a third party admissions service. When determining the procedures for handling applications, they specify appropriate timescales for processing them.

Providers protect the confidentiality of the personal data provided by applicants during the applications process, particularly with regard to data sharing and setting time limits on data retention. This includes notifying all parties about any additional criteria to be considered in the selection process, for example those relating to medical and criminal records, as required by some PSRBs. The purpose, use and contribution of this information to the selection decision are clearly communicated to applicants at the earliest appropriate point in the cycle.

Further guidelines references and resources

SPA, Admission policies

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

ECU (2012) *Equitable admissions for underrepresented groups*

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

Action on Access, *Disability Focus Guide Admissions*

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

Data Protection Act 1998

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

The Equality Act 2010 (Disability Regulations) 2010

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

Access to Higher Education, Policies and publications

www.accesstohe.ac.uk/home/publications/default.asp

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

www.ucas.ac.uk/he_staff/dates

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (2012) *Mentor Guidance Pack*
www.scqf.org.uk/content/files/resources/SSSC_RPL_Mentor_Guidance_Pack.pdf

SPA, Vocational Qualifications
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/vocationalqualificat

SPA (2010) *SPA application recommendations*
www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ApplicantExperience/SPA_Application_recommendations.pdf
www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ApplicantExperience/SPA_Application_recommendations.pdf

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 applicants.

Decisions about selecting applicants are made by autonomous higher education providers. A range of evidence may be considered when determining the potential of an applicant 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 applicants are reliable, relevant and valid. On this basis they articulate and communicate to applicants the rationale for requiring them to provide particular information about themselves as part of the application process.

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, for example, those made by PSRBs or sponsoring bodies, immigration and English language requirements for international students, as well as occupational health requirements.

In assessing achievement and potential to succeed, or in differentiating between applicants with broadly equivalent knowledge, skills and experience (including recognition of prior learning), higher education providers give careful consideration to the different ways required or desirable characteristics, for example team working or personal initiative, might be demonstrated. Apart from being demonstrated through formal learning, such evidence may be provided, for example, through involvement in sporting, artistic or voluntary activities, through exercising responsibilities as a carer or parent, or from the workplace. Higher education providers are sensitive to the extent to which individual applicants have had the chance to participate in different activities. 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 clearly to applicants what these selection tools entail, why they are being used and the relative contribution they make to the selection decision.

Further guidelines, references and resources

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

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

SPA, Planning and managing admissions
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/planningandmanaginga

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

QAA, subject benchmark statements - see individual subject for advice on PSRB accreditation
www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.aspx

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

Access to HE (2012) *Approaches to setting entry criteria and conditional offers*
www.accesstohe.ac.uk/home/publications/AdmissionsGuidanceHEStaff/2012-3.pdf

UCAS, Entry Profiles
www.ucas.ac.uk/he_staff/courses/entryprofiles

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

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

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

Receiving the decision and feedback

Indicator 8

Higher education providers determine how decisions and the reasons for those decisions are recorded and conveyed to applicants, providing guidance on communicating with applicants about why they were, or were not, successful.

Higher education providers ensure that procedures for recording and justifying selection decisions are systematically and consistently implemented, providing a sound basis for communication of the decision and the provision of feedback to applicants.

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

To assist successful applicants 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 applicants, once an offer of a place has been made. Providers inform applicants of their obligations as early as possible, and no later than the time the offer of a place is made. Such obligations may include practical issues such as timetabling, accommodation and financial matters.

Higher education providers respond to requests for further information promptly to help successful applicants make up their minds about whether they want to accept the offer. Applicants are given sufficient time to consider their options.

From time to time, providers may find it necessary to make changes to a programme between the time prospectuses are published or offers are made to applicants and the time when registration of students has been completed. Changes may be due to staff becoming unavailable, alterations to the accreditation status, cost or location of a programme or to a programme being suspended or discontinued. In such circumstances, higher education providers inform successful applicants, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes and ensure that they are advised of the options available to them, which may include changing module choices, applying to a different programme at the same provider or applying to a different provider altogether.

Higher education providers have in place transparent and effective arrangements for providing feedback to applicants who have not been offered a place. Providers carefully consider how they inform applicants that they have been unsuccessful. Considerations include the nature and extent of feedback available to unsuccessful applicants, 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 applicants about alternative options for study within different programmes of study.

Further guidelines, references and resources

SPA (2012) SPA Good Practice: Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants
www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/feedbacktoapplicants

UCAS, Making decisions
www.ucas.ac.uk/he_staff/admissionsexplained/make_decision

UCAS, Providing feedback
www.ucas.ac.uk/he_staff/admissionsexplained/feedback

SPA (2011) SPA post-application recommendations
www.spa.ac.uk/documents/ApplicantExperience/SPA_Post-application_recommendations.pdf

Making the transition from applicant to current student

Indicator 9

Higher education providers support successful applicants in making the transition from applicant to current student.

Higher education providers inform successful applicants of the curricular and extra-curricular activities connected to their programme that will be available to them when they become current students. This enables successful applicants to think ahead about the routes and options they might take during their programmes (see also *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching* and Indicators 4 and 5 of *Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement*). Information about the services and resources available is also made available. Where possible, arrangements are made in advance for successful applicants who need specific support or adjustments to the learning environment.

Successful applicants are provided with information about the regulations to which students are subject once they are enrolled. This may include clarification of rights concerning intellectual property developed while they are students of the provider.

Further guidelines, references and resources

SPA (2011) *SPA transition recommendations*

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

HEA, International student induction

www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/internationalisation/ISL_Induction

Student Loan Company

www.slc.co.uk

NUS, Becoming a Student

www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/becoming-a-student

International Staff, Induction of students to UKHE

www.internationalstaff.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching/induction-of-students

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=Reasonable Adjustment

Appendix 1: The Expectation and Indicators

The Expectation

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

Recruitment and admission policies, procedures and practices are accessible, explicit and transparent: they are consistently applied and documented resulting in justified and equitable admission practices that adhere to the principles of fair admission.

The Indicators of sound practice

Indicator 1

Higher education providers articulate and implement a strategic approach to recruitment and admission: they promote a shared understanding of this approach among all those involved in recruitment and admission processes.

Indicator 2

Each stage of the recruitment and admission cycle is conducted in a professional manner by duly authorised and competent representatives of the higher education provider.

Indicator 3

Higher education providers have procedures for handling complaints and appeals about recruitment and admission which are fair, accessible and timely and help providers improve the service they offer.

Indicator 4

Higher education providers regularly monitor, review and update their recruitment and admission policies, procedures and practices in order to enhance them and to ensure that they continue to support the provider's mission and strategic objectives.

Indicator 5

Recruitment activity undertaken by higher education providers assists potential applicants in making informed decisions about going to or continuing in higher education and about applying for programmes suited to their interest and skills.

Indicator 6

Higher education providers handle applications professionally, consistently and expeditiously, keeping applicants informed at key stages in the 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 applicants.

Indicator 8

Higher education providers determine how decisions and the reasons for those decisions are recorded and conveyed to applicants, providing guidance on communicating with applicants about why they were, or were not, successful.

Indicator 9

Higher education providers support successful applicants in making the transition from applicant to current student.

Appendix 2: Membership of the advisory group for this Chapter

Martyn Annis	University of Brighton
David Barrett	Office for Fair Access (OFFA)
Lynda Brady	Open University
Ruth Burchell	QAA
Dr Hywel Davies	Aberystwyth University
Dr Melinda Drowley	QAA (chair)
Nick Entwistle	National Union of Students (NUS)
Rebecca Gaukroger	University of Edinburgh
Eric Manning	Regent's College
Mike Nicholson	University of Oxford
Liam Owens	Edge Hill University
Kevin Porter	Royal College of Music
Gemma Prichard	University of the Arts London
Dan Shaffer	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)
Roderick Smith	University of Birmingham
Dr Tessa Stone	Brightside Trust
Helen Thorne	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
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