

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN



QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

CELEBRATING  
**525 YEARS**  
1495 – 2020

# Mapping Against the UK Quality Code

SECTION 1: ADMISSIONS, RECRUITMENT & WIDENING ACCESS

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# SECTION 1: ADMISSIONS, RECRUITMENT & WIDENING ACCESS

## INTRODUCTION

The Quality Code is split into 12 themes, available online on the QAA website at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>. As part of this, *Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access* is important in governing the processes and procedures surrounding the prospective student and applicants. The Quality Code describes this theme as follows:

*This Theme relates to three separate but interconnected areas, admissions, recruitment and widening Access, which are of interest to prospective students, enrolled students and their supporters (such as relatives or educators); and for the UK and devolved governments; and the public. This Theme aims to provide advice and guidance to build a framework for providers to assure quality in these areas. While the three interconnected activities are referred to separately and in further detail throughout the Theme, it is recognised that different learner journeys result in multiple and varied pathways to enrolment with a provider. The manner or order with which the prospective student and the provider connects with these activities will not necessarily be uniform. Further to this, all UK providers have legal or statutory obligations they must meet, particularly around information available to prospective students. This Theme does not seek to duplicate or interpret these.*

In defining key terms that will be used frequently in this section, the Quality Code notes the following:

**Admissions:** Refers to the practices and processes developed and delivered by providers that relate to admitting a prospective student up to the point of enrolment on a course through an application and selection process.

**Recruitment:** Generally refers to a broad range of activities and initiatives undertaken by providers or their representatives prior to the point of admission. This includes outreach, events and various marketing activities, which ultimately encourage prospective students to either apply to, or start a course with, that provider.

**Widening access:** Within the scope of this Code, widening access refers to the process by which providers may (or may not) vary their admission or selection processes according to local or national policy guidelines and expectations.

**Prospective student:** Refers to all those who are applying or considering applying for any course, at any level and employing any mode of study, with a higher education provider.

**Current student:** Students who are registered/enrolled on any course at undergraduate or postgraduate level, with a higher education provider. An individual becomes a 'current student' at the point of registration/enrolment.

**Autonomous higher education provider:** Higher education providers that are independent, self-governing bodies, active in teaching, research and scholarship.

**Inclusive admissions:** An admissions system which seeks to minimise any unnecessary barriers in the process which may prevent some groups of applicants from making a successful application.

## SECTION 1: ADMISSIONS, RECRUITMENT & WIDENING ACCESS

The Quality Code has three different sections: the expectations for standards; the expectations for quality; and the guiding principles. The relevant expectations for standards and quality are detailed below. The Guiding Principles are mapped to the University's own policies, procedures and quality mechanisms. There are two separate sections for the University's practices, detailing what the University does and has in place to support that expectation/principle, as well as the supporting documentation, which includes reference to supporting policy, procedure, website or other document.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STANDARDS & CORE/COMMON PRACTICES	EXPECTATIONS FOR QUALITY & CORE/COMMON PRACTICES
The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.	The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.
	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

QUALITY CODE PRINCIPLES	UNIVERSITY PRACTICES	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
<b>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</b>		
<p>1. Policies and procedures for application, selection and admission to higher education courses are transparent and accessible.</p> <p>Policies and procedures for selection and admission to higher education should be readily accessible by prospective students and their supporters, and clearly articulate how the application and selection process</p>	<p>We ensure that admission is based entirely on merit and on the basis to achieve as is stated in our Admissions Policy. Entry requirements are outlined transparently in all recruitment material ensuring applicants are fully appraised of these requirements.</p> <p>We have a long-standing commitment to widening access. Our Widening Access web page provides clear information on the criteria which the University will consider when making an Adjusted or Access Threshold Offer. Our Contextualised Admissions and Access Thresholds Policy provides further detail around the criteria used.</p>	<p><a href="#">Admissions Policy (Policy)</a>  <a href="#">Widening Access Criteria (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Contextual Admissions and Access Threshold Policy (Policy)</a>            Example of programme page with entry qualifications:  <a href="#">History Entry Qualifications (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">All Entry Requirements (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">How to Apply - Study Here (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Appeals and Complaints (Webpage)</a></p>

<p>operates. This will include expected timescales and key milestones, what communications they will receive and through which channels, what actions they will need to undertake and when, and how to request feedback or submit a complaint or appeal.</p>	<p>Dedicated webpages ensure that different cohorts of applicants are informed of the timescales associated with each type of application and who to expect communications to come from.</p> <p>Appeals and complaints from applicants are considered under the appropriate University's Policy on Student Appeals and Complaint Handling Procedure.</p>	
<p><b>2. Higher education providers use fair, reliable and appropriate assessment methods that enable them to select students with the potential to complete the course successfully.</b></p> <p>An effective admissions process should select students based on their potential to succeed on their chosen course of study, and assessment should be aligned to this goal. Assessment methods should be fair and reliable: consistently applied and delivering consistent outcomes. Tools used to differentiate the suitability of applicants should be appropriate to the course of study and within reasonable expectations of prospective students.</p>	<p>The admissions process is managed by a central team led by the Directorate of <a href="#">External Relations Student Recruitment</a>, and selection is carried out by trained, professional admissions staff and by trained academic staff.</p> <p>Selection criteria are set out clearly on web pages managed by the Directorate of <a href="#">External Relations Student Recruitment</a>, with any changes to entry criteria considered and approved by the University's Student Recruitment Committee. Criteria are applied by staff consistently at a programme specific level and are designed to take account of an applicant's ability to cope with the challenges of a university education in addition to academic achievement to date.</p> <p>We review our admissions policy and guidelines for admission on an annual basis to ensure that these continue to set out fair, reliable and appropriate assessment methods and criteria.</p> <p>For certain degree programmes, e.g. education, music, medicine, interviews and auditions are utilised to assess prospective students in the selection procedures. Prospective students are provided with information to enable them to prepare for, and engage with, the process.</p>	<p><a href="#">Admissions Policy (Policy)</a>  <a href="#">Student Recruitment Committee (Webpage)</a>  <i>Example: <a href="#">Interviews for Medicine</a></i>  <i>Example: <a href="#">Interviews for Secondary Education</a></i>  <i>Example: <a href="#">Interviews for Primary Education</a></i>  <i>Example: <a href="#">Interviews for MA Education</a></i></p>
<p><b>3. Higher education providers reduce or remove unnecessary barriers for prospective students.</b></p>	<p>We have a long-standing commitment to widening access and removing unnecessary barriers for prospective students. Our Widening Access web page provides clear information on the criteria which the University will consider when making an Adjusted or Access Threshold Offer. Our</p>	<p><a href="#">Widening Access Criteria (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Contextual Admissions and Access Threshold Policy (Policy)</a>  <a href="#">Finance and Funding (Webpage)</a></p>

<p>The application process should be inclusive and allow all prospective students to make an application and receive a fair outcome, regardless of background. Higher education providers should aim to reduce or remove any barriers not necessary to the appropriate selection and assessment of applicants. Action should be taken to ensure that internal policies and procedures do not have a negative impact on specific individuals or demographic groups and obstruct their access to the course.</p>	<p>Contextualised Admissions and Access Thresholds Policy provides further detail around the criteria used.</p> <p>We have a range of scholarships targeted at those from low- income backgrounds which are actively promoted through our webpages. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ scholarships to support students from Scotland</li> <li>▪ scholarships for students from the rest of the UK from a lower income bracket</li> <li>▪ scholarships for those from low/lower-middle income countries</li> </ul> <p>In line with all university policies, those associated with admission are subject to assessment under Equality Impact legislation to ensure specific groups of individuals are not obstructed from undertaking any programme within the University.</p> <p><del>We have also introduced Covid-19 bursaries, to support those directly affected by the pandemic, perhaps because of a loss of part time employment, or to support digital access for online learning.</del></p> <p>To build further on support measures already in place, the University of Aberdeen has committed to become a 'University of Sanctuary' and work in partnership with City of Sanctuary and other partner initiatives to inspire and support universities to develop a culture of welcome within their own institutions and their wider communities.</p>	<p>Example <a href="#">Aberdeen Global Scholarship (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Hope Heroes: Alumni (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Universities of Sanctuary (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Equality Impact Assessment (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Refugees and Asylum Seekers (Webpage)</a></p>
<p>4. Information provided to prospective students for recruitment and widening access purposes supports students in making informed decisions.</p> <p>Prospective students should have confidence that information supplied to them during</p>	<p>We ensure that admission is based entirely on merit and on the basis to achieve as is stated in our Admissions Policy Entry qualifications are transparently set out in all relevant material. Entry requirements are outlined transparently in all recruitment material ensuring applicants are fully appraised of these requirements.</p> <p>We provide print and digital material specifically aimed at School and College partners and offer regular events (virtual when face-to-face is restricted) to supplement this material.</p>	<p><a href="#">Undergraduate Studies (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Information Guides and Advice, Undergraduate (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Postgraduate Taught Studies (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">On Demand Studies (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Widening Access Criteria (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Contextual Admissions and Access Threshold Policy (Policy)</a>  <a href="#">Widening Access (Webpage)</a>  <a href="#">Entry from College (Webpage)</a></p>

<p>recruitment and widening access activities is accurate and reliable, and enables them to make informed decisions about higher education. They should be directed to sources of further information to enable them to make informed decisions at the point of application for higher education courses.</p>	<p>In addition to events, there are other ways prospective students can contact us when seeking information enabling them to receive tailored responses to their specific queries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- email</li> <li>- enquiry form (“Enquire Now” option on web pages)</li> <li>- chat option on web pages</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Open Days, Events and Visits (Webpage)</a></p>
<p><b>5. All staff, representatives and partners engaged in the delivery of admissions, recruitment and widening access are appropriately trained and resourced.</b></p> <p>Admissions, recruitment and widening access activities should be conducted in a professional manner, and higher education providers ensure that anyone delivering these activities has received appropriate training and support. Training and resources should be reviewed, evaluated and refreshed regularly to ensure that practice and policy are fully aligned and reflect the current landscape.</p>	<p>Processes and activities relating to admissions, recruitment and widening access are managed by a central team led by the Directorate of <a href="#">Student Recruitment External Relations</a>, who receive regular and appropriate training, support, and professional development. The team’s activities include engaging with College partners and sector-wide networking groups, and engagement with professional development provided by these bodies (for example UCAS policy groups and UCAS Standing Group; Higher Education Liaison Officers (HELOA) and its Scottish counterpart (SHELOA))</p> <p>To ensure appropriate allocation of resources, volumes of applications across the application cycle are monitored on a regular basis and resources allocated or re-directed to address any changing pattern of demand.</p> <p>All staff are required to complete Equality &amp; Diversity and Unconscious Bias training.</p>	
<p><b>6. Providers continually develop widening access strategies and policies in line with local and national guidance.</b></p> <p>Procedures and policies governing the purpose and scope of</p>	<p>The University’s Widening Access Strategy is informed by national policy. This area of policy is overseen by <del>the University’s Access and Articulation Committee, which reports to</del> the University’s Student Recruitment Committee. The University’s Senior Management Team considers actively the direction to be taken by the institution in this area.</p>	<p><a href="#">Widening Access (Webpage)</a></p>

<p>widening access activities and initiatives are determined by a range of local and national bodies. There are different and evolving practices reflected across UK nations and providers should respond in line with stated expectations and develop their strategies in context with relevant frameworks.</p>	<p>The University has strong regional and national links in relation to widening access, with representation on the Universities &amp; Colleges Scotland Joint Articulation Group (JAG), National Access &amp; Widening Participation Mangers Group (NAWPMG), Scottish Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP) <del>and also as joint Chair of SCAPP Articulation Working Group.</del></p>	
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