16   ADMISSIONS AND ENROLMENT

PRINCIPLES OF ADMISSION

16.1   All applications to programmes shall be dealt with in accordance with the university's admissions policy and procedures. The university's admissions policy, practice and procedures shall be aligned with the principles set out in the UK Quality Code.

16.2   The principal criterion for determining a candidate's suitability for admission to a programme is that there is a reasonable expectation that they will be able to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme and achieve the standard required for the award.

16.3   Entry requirements are intended to facilitate assessment of the candidate's ability to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. Entry requirements for all programmes are identified at the point of approval and included in the relevant programme documentation.

16.4   The university is committed to widening access to higher education and encourages applications from prospective students who do not have standard entry qualifications.

16.5   The university is committed to the principle of recognising prior learning, whether certificated or not. Where prior informal learning can be assessed, it may be recognised for the purpose of entry to a programme, and/or for the award of academic credit towards a degree programme (see section 16.24 onwards).

16.6   The university operates a fair and open admissions process committed to equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. All applications are considered on merit and on the basis of ability to achieve, without discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender identity, pregnancy and maternity status, race, religion and/or belief, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic background. The university welcomes applications from all prospective students and aims to provide appropriate services to students with learning support needs or disabilities.

16.7   The university is a data controller as defined in the Data Protection Act 1998. It is required to collect personal data in order to process applications and to reach decisions on entry. Any data provided in relation to an application (including data provided to the university by UCAS) will be treated in confidence by selectors and administrative staff in relevant departments.

16.8   In the event of a successful application the data will be held as the basis of the ongoing student record and will only be passed to other organisations outside the academic partnership where it is obliged to do so by law for statistical reporting (eg Scottish Funding Council) and to awarding bodies for certification purposes, or as agreed by the student.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

16.9   The university publishes standard minimum entry requirements for its undergraduate degree programmes, which may be reviewed from time to time.

16.10 Programme teams may seek approval for specific entry requirements at a higher level than the standard minimum entry requirements, in relation to academic qualifications and/or English language proficiency.

16.11 Entry requirements for SQA awards offered by the university are those agreed through the university's SQA programme approval process and not those shown in SQA documentation. SQA guidance will be taken into account when setting entry requirements for SQA awards.

16.12 The approved entry requirements and admissions process for each programme, including SQA programmes, will be applied equally by all academic partners providing entry to that programme, ensuring equivalence of opportunity to all applicants regardless of location.

16.13 Applicants will be required to meet the entry requirements for the programme on which they initially enrol, regardless of any intention to progress to a higher level qualification (eg top-up degree) at a later stage.

16.14 Applicants for undergraduate programmes who do not have standard entry qualifications, but who have relevant academic or professional qualifications or can demonstrate appropriate informal learning may be considered for entry.

16.15 Applicants for taught postgraduate programmes will normally require an honours degree, however flexibility may be applied in the case of experienced professionals studying on vocational programmes.

16.16 Students whose first language is not English applying for programmes taught through the medium of English must normally reach satisfactory IELTS scores, or the equivalent scores in other recognised Secure English Language Tests:
   o For entry at SCQF levels 6-8, overall IELTS score of 5.5 with no element below 5.0
   o For entry at SCQF levels 9-10, overall IELTS score of 6.0 with no element below 5.5
   o For entry at SCQF levels 11-12, overall IELTS score of 6.5 with no element below 6.0.

   Continuing students who are progressing from SCQF level 8 to level 9 will not require to be retested.

Entry with Advanced Standing

16.17 Entry requirements for specific degree programmes may be approved which allow entry with advanced standing to a particular level of the programme. This is on the basis of a recognised qualification or combination of qualifications which are deemed to be equivalent to the lower level(s) of the programme. In this case, the specified qualification(s) enable direct entry into the degree programme and the RPL process will not be applicable.

16.18 Decisions on entry with advanced standing will be made through the normal admissions process.

Articulation from SQA HNC/D to degree programmes

16.19   Most degrees have approved articulation routes from SQA HNC/D awards which enable entry with advanced standing. Such articulation routes may specify particular units and/or a particular level of student achievement.

16.20   Where students have successfully met the requirements of an approved HNC/D articulation route, whether with the university or another institution, they may be admitted to the relevant degree programme at the appropriate level, recognising the credit gained through the HNC/D. In some cases, the credit total may require to be supplemented by additional study or appropriate RPL claim for informal learning.

16.21   For the avoidance of doubt credit at SCQF Level 6 will only be counted towards the necessary credit totals for a university award where it has been achieved through SQA units as part of an SQA group award which is predominantly at Level 7 or above previously completed by the student.

APPEALS

16.22   If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of an application for admission, they should discuss the matter in the first instance with the relevant programme leader (for degree programmes) or the academic partner applied to (for non-degree programmes). If the matter is not resolved, the applicant may submit an appeal through the assessment appeals procedure, although only on eligible grounds (see Section 18.6). There are no grounds for appeal on the basis of the academic judgement regarding the admissions decision.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

16.23   The university recognises and adopts nationally accepted definitions and principles relating to the recognition of prior learning developed by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF Handbook 2015) and QAA Scotland (National RPL Framework for Higher Education 2014). Further information is available in the university's RPL guidance (www.uhi.ac.uk/rpl).

16.24   Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations, such as through life and work experiences. SCQF RPL guidelines define both formative and summative purposes of RPL.

Formal and informal learning

16.25   Formal learning refers to previously assessed and certificated learning which may be recognised, as appropriate, for academic purposes. It takes place within the context of programmes delivered by learning and training providers. It is assessed and credit-rated and leads to recognised qualifications. Recognition of prior formal learning can also be known as Credit Transfer.

16.26   Informal learning (or non-formal) refers to learning gained through work or life experience, which may be gained in the workplace, or in community or voluntary settings. Informal

learning may be assessed through the RPL process to judge whether the outcomes are comparable to the entry requirements of a programme, or to some of the learning outcomes of the programme which the applicant is seeking credit within.

16.27 An applicant may combine formal and informal learning in an RPL claim to seek entry to a university programme, or credit within an award made by the university. Applicants seeking credit towards a SQA award will use SQA's RPL process.

Specific and general credit

16.28 Specific credit is credit which is matched against the learning outcomes of specific modules within a programme. It enables students to be exempted from those modules as they are deemed to have already met the learning outcomes through their prior learning. Specific module exemptions will be recorded on the student record system. This may be relevant where a professional body requires specific criteria to be met and evidenced as being met for a student to gain accreditation with that professional body or for a specific award.

16.29 General credit is credit which is awarded at a particular level but not matched to specific module outcomes. This would normally be where an applicant is seeking entry with advanced standing or where there are optional modules as part of the programme structure. General credit does enable exemption from modules but not on the basis of evidencing that the learning outcomes of specific modules have been met.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) LIMITS

16.30 An award cannot be achieved solely on the basis of assessment of an RPL claim for credit.

16.31 The maximum credit that shall be awarded for RPL is as follows (see also Section 14a.19 for entry to postgraduate awards):
   o for students registering for a CertHE – 60 credits at SCQF Level 7
   o for students registering for a DipHE – 120 credits at SCQF Level 7
   o for students registering for an Ordinary degree – 240 credits at SCQF Levels 7 and 8
   o for students registering for an Honours degree – 360 credits at SCQF Levels 7-9.

Thus, in order to exit / graduate with an award, apart from a CertHE, students are required to complete successfully at least the 120 credits of the final level of that award.

16.32 Where a programme of 120 credits (at SCQF Level 9) is designed to build on another award to achieve a degree, students may not enter the programme with credit beyond that used to enter at that level.

16.33 Credit awarded through RPL, whether specific or general, will be ungraded, and therefore excluded when determining the final classification of a university award.

16.34 An applicant who already holds an Honours degree will not normally be permitted advanced entry at Level 10 to another Honours degree in a similar subject area. Exceptions may be made where the student is applying to enter a highly industry-specialised award or one accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body.

16.35 Programme teams may seek approval, exceptionally, to specify higher or lower limits for the award of specific or general credit within a programme.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) PROCESS

The timing of a claim

16.36 Applicants are required to submit RPL claims for entry to a programme or for academic credit prior to commencement of studies. In circumstances where this is not possible, an applicant may be enrolled on a programme, but must be advised that if their claim is wholly or partly unsuccessful they must complete any modules for which credit was not awarded.

Assessment of RPL claims

16.37 RPL claims will be assessed by the programme leader and at least one other RPL assessor. If the RPL claim is for credit, rather than for entry to a programme, they will make a recommendation to the RPL Panel.

RPL Panel membership and remit

16.38 The RPL Panel membership shall include:
- o Chair of Tier 2 Board of Examiners (Chair) (or nominee)
- o Academic Registrar (or nominee)
- o two Subject Network Leaders

In attendance:
- o Clerk to the Panel
- o Other staff as required, as agreed by the Chair.

16.39 The RPL Panel, having delegated authority from the board of examiners for this process, will consider RPL claims and evidence provided, and the recommendation from the programme team, and determine the level and volume of credit to be awarded.

Award of credit for RPL

16.40 Where general credit is awarded through the RPL process, this will be entered in the student record system in multiples of 20 credits, equivalent to a standard module. General credit awarded for the whole of a level (or a sufficient part thereof) will be represented as a block of credit of the appropriate value.

16.41 Where specific credit is awarded, enabling exemption from specific modules, this will be entered in the student record system as equivalent to the credit value of these modules.

16.42 Where students have been awarded credit through RPL, this will be recorded on the student record and reported at the board of examiners. Evidence to support RPL claims will be made available to members of the board of examiners on request.

Double counting of credit

16.43 Once credit has been granted by the university for specified learning, whether through successful completion of modules or RPL, the credit may normally only be counted towards one university award at this level (ie undergraduate or postgraduate). Exceptionally, the re-use of credit to contribute towards another award at the same or lower level may be

permissible where the student is applying to enter a highly industry-specialised award or one accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body. The limitations on credit awarded through RPL would be applicable in such cases.

16.44 Other awarding bodies, such as SQA, may have different approaches to the use or reuse of credits within their awards.

APPEALS

16.45 If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of an RPL claim, they should discuss the matter in the first instance with the relevant programme leader. If the matter is not resolved, the applicant may submit an appeal through the assessment appeals procedure, although only on eligible grounds (see Section 18.10-12). There are no grounds for appeal on the basis of the academic judgement regarding the RPL decision.

16.46 An appeal against a RPL decision will only be considered where there is an alleged breach of procedure.

ENROLMENT

16.47 Following acceptance on to a programme of study, all students shall enrol at the point of initial admission to a programme. Thereafter, as continuing students, they are required to enrol at the commencement of each subsequent academic year during which they are undertaking study.

16.48 All new entrants must provide certificates or equivalent documentary evidence (original or copies) at enrolment as proof of their qualifications, where these are qualifications are not awarded by SQA.

16.49 Eligibility criteria for continuing students to enrol at the commencement of each academic year are set out in the Assessment Regulations, Section 17B (provisions for the progression of students).

16.50 All students enrolling for a programme of full-time or part-time study are eligible to receive a student ID card.

16.51 As part of the enrolment process, a student shall formally acknowledge that they accept and will abide by the *Academic Standards and Quality Regulations*. A copy of these regulations will be provided to students on request and is available at www.uhi.ac.uk/regulations.

HOME ACADEMIC PARTNER

16.52 A student will normally be allocated, at the point of application, to the Home Academic Partner (HAP) which is closest to their term-time place of residence. See also Section 9, responsibilities of academic partners in respect of academic provision.

16.53 The HAP is the academic partner at which the student is based, ie where they enrol, access learning resources, and sit exams.

16.54   A student may request a transfer of HAP if their personal circumstances change. Such a request is subject to approval by both the current and proposed new HAP.

16.55   Any request to transfer HAP from an international fee status student must also be approved by executive office admissions due to potential implications for the student's immigration status and/or the university's Student route license.

PAYMENT OF FEES AND DEBT TO THE UNIVERSITY

16.56   Students are personally liable to the university for payment of tuition fees. In the event of any fee-paying authority or other person or body not making payment on their behalf, the student must undertake to make payment of the full amount due.

16.57   Where an applicant has previously studied within the university and has an outstanding debt to the university or to any academic partner, they shall not be admitted (or re-admitted after a formal break in studies) to any programme until that outstanding debt is cleared.

16.58   For continuing students, any outstanding debt shall normally be cleared prior to enrolment in each academic year (for full-time or structured part-time students semester to semester progression within an academic year is not subject to such constraint). At their discretion the relevant HAP may, in individual cases, permit re-enrolment subject to a plan being agreed with the student for recovery of the outstanding debt.

16.59   The university will withhold the final certificate for a university award until any outstanding tuition fee debt has been cleared or the sum at issue consigned pending agreement, arbitration or judicial decision.

RE-ADMISSION AND INTERMEDIATE AWARDS

16.60   Where a student leaves a programme prior to the final stage, the board of examiners will determine their eligibility for any intermediate award. Students may seek re-admission to the programme at a later date. Re-admission shall be at the discretion of the programme leader, and specifically shall take into account any changes to the programme since the student's previous attendance. Students who are re-admitted to a programme in this way are required to return to the university any award certificate they have received.

ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL

Attendance and exclusion
16.61   It is the responsibility of students to attend scheduled classes and prescribed activities for the modules on which they are enrolled. Programme teams may seek approval for specific module or programme regulations which specify minimum levels of attendance that are required for formal assessment and/or continuation on the programme of study. Where a student's attendance is judged to be unsatisfactory, they may be:
o excluded from formal assessment in that module
o withdrawn from their programme of study.

16.62 Where a student fails to engage with their studies as required (in accordance with current guidance or as otherwise set out in specific module descriptor / programme regulations) the university-led withdrawal process shall be initiated.

16.63 Students may appeal their exclusion or withdrawal through the complaints handling procedure.

16.64 Where any disciplinary process which may result in loss of registered status has commenced, requests for permanent withdrawal or suspension of studies shall not be submitted, or supported.

16.65 Academic partners are responsible for implementing the university policies and regulations regarding the identification of individuals whose registered status should be reviewed, the conduct of such review, opportunities for appeal and the timescales for these processes and for reporting outcomes to student records office.

Attendance requirements for international students

16.66 The university and its academic partners are responsible for monitoring the attendance of international students sponsored under Student route of the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) processes. Where a sponsored student fails to meet attendance requirements or requests to withdraw/is deemed to have withdrawn from study, this must be managed and reported in accordance with the monitoring requirements set out by UKVI, these being managed by the academic partner or executive office Level 1 user (https://www.gov.uk/visas-immigration).

Permanent withdrawal

16.67 Students seeking to withdraw permanently from their programme of study should contact their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) or an appropriate student support officer to discuss the matter. Students may initiate the withdrawal process, but it can only be completed by a member of staff. Further information about the withdrawal process can be found on the website (www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support/thinking-of-leaving).

Suspension of studies

16.68 A programme of study shall be continuously pursued except that a student may, with the permission of the programme leader, suspend their studies. The period of suspension shall be continuous and will not normally exceed two semesters in the first instance, but subsequent requests for further periods of suspension will be considered. Students seeking to suspend their studies must contact their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) or an appropriate student support officer to discuss the matter.

16.69 If the request is approved, the period of suspension will not count as part of the total time allowed for completion of the programme. The maximum time allowed for approved suspension of studies is four successive semesters.

16.70 Students who have suspended study must inform the university of their intention to return, by contacting the student records office at least three months prior to recommencing study. Students not responding to letters enquiring about their intention to return to study will be

assumed to have withdrawn permanently. Students are responsible for ensuring that the university has, at all times, valid contact details for them.

16.71   Students re-commencing studies after a period of suspension will begin their studies on the first day of the relevant semester. Students may be required to undertake new assessments for any modules which were incomplete at the point of suspension.