

SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC POLICY DECISIONS – SUMMER 2012

This information note refers to decisions made at the following meetings:

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 9/5/12

Academic Board – 13/6/12

Senate – 4/7/12

Minute numbers are given to indicate the source of the information set out below. Where extracts of minutes are included verbatim, this is indicated by speech marks.

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SECTION A – FOR ACTION

1. Marking Policies (S.M.234.12)

Resolved ‘that the changes to the University’s Marking Policies, as set out in the Extract of the Assessment Policies for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Awards paper S/12/43 (Appendix A), be approved for implementation with effect from 2012-13.’

See Appendix A.

2. Introducing a formal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure and Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students (S.M.245.12)

Resolved ‘that a procedure for Extenuating Circumstances to be submitted by postgraduate research students, as set out in paper S/14/43 (Appendix D), be approved with effect from October 2012.’

See: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/ACBD/2011/documents/2012-06-13-Item16-ExtenuatingCircumstances.doc>

3. Policy on Conduct of Research Degree Vivas by Video Link (S.M.246.12)

Resolved ‘that the changes to the Higher Degree Regulations, as set out in paper S/12/43, be implemented with immediate effect.’

See: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/ACBD/2011/documents/2012-06-13-Item18-PolicyonConductofResearchDegreeVivasbyVideoLink.doc>

4. Report from Working Party on External Examiners (S.M.264.12)

Resolved 'that the revised Criteria for the Nomination of External Examiners, as set out in paper S/12/46 (Appendix A), and the Role and Responsibilities of External Examiners, as set out in paper S/12/46 (Appendix B), be approved with effect from 2012-13.'

See Appendices B and C below.

5. Task and Finish Group Reviewing Fitness to Practise Procedures (S.M.265.12)

Resolved 'that the revised Fitness to Practise Procedures, as set out in paper S/12/46, (Appendix C) be approved with effect from 2012-13.'

See Appendix D below.

6. University Admissions Policies for entry in October 2013 (S.MM.266-268.12)

Resolved

- i. 'that revisions to the *Undergraduate Admissions Policy* for entry in October 2013, as set out in paper S/12/46 (Appendix D), be approved;
- ii. that revisions to the *Graduate Admissions Policy* for entry in October 2013, as set out in paper S/12/46 (Appendix E), be approved;
- iii. that the Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions policy documents should remain separate documents, while ensuring that content which was generic to both should be harmonised and standardised as far as possible.'

See Appendices E and F below.

SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION

1. Amendments to Undergraduate Rules of Assessment

Changes will be published in the revised version of the Rules of Assessment on the web over the summer at:

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/ug/rules.htm>

http://www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/students/pgt/pgtrules_2011.htm

2. Amendments to the wording of the Academic Offences Procedures (S.M.235.12)

Resolved 'that the amendments to the Academic Offences Procedures, as set out in paper S/12/43, be implemented with effect from 2012-13'

That the following is added to Section A of the Academic Offences Procedures:

[To be A16 in the Procedures]

Where an academic offence has been alleged and a student has withdrawn, or been required to withdraw, from the University for reasons not related to the allegation; the Academic Offences Procedures will be completed. If the student is found to have committed an academic offence, a notional penalty will be allocated and a record made of the outcome. The outcome will be communicated to the student in writing.

3. Progress and Appeal Procedures for Taught Programmes of Study (S.M.236.12)

Resolved that the amendments to the Progress and Appeal Procedures for Taught Programmes of Study, as set out in paper S/12/43, be approved with effect from the 2012-13,

See <https://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/committeedocs/ACBD/2011/documents/2012-06-13-Item9-ProgressandAppealsProcedures.doc>

Richard Stock
Deputy Academic Registrar
August 2012

CIRCULATION

FOR ACTION:

Heads of Department/School
Directors of
 Human Rights Centre
 Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities
 Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies
 Study Abroad Office
 Centre for Theoretical Studies
Departmental Administrators (including Centres listed above)

FOR INFORMATION:

Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Deans
Academic Registrar
Faculty Managers
Academic Officers

Extract of the Assessment Policies for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Awards at the University of Essex.

F) Marking Policy for all Taught Students *

(* These are the minimum requirements and departments can double-mark more work if they wish, or if they are required to do so by a professional body.)

Assessment type	Marking Protocol (minimum requirements*)
COURSEWORK	
Essays/assignments	Single marked, <i>(but moderation needed for GTAs, new staff**, and assessed coursework titles marked by multiple staff)</i>
Coursework tests using written answer papers	Single marked, <i>(but moderation needed for GTAs, new staff**, and tests marked by multiple staff)</i>
Coursework tests using OMR sheets or online testing tools	An independent check must be made to check that the programme is working accurately and that marks have been assigned to the correct candidates.
Individual item of coursework comprising at least 30 credits' worth of the year's assessment (including PGT Dissertations and Final Year Undergraduate Project reports)	Must be second marked or blind double marked***
Performance-based coursework with a permanent output, capable of being shown to the External Examiner	Single marked, <i>(but moderation needed for GTAs, new staff**, and assessed coursework titles marked by multiple staff)</i>
Performance-based coursework with a non-permanent output worth up to and including 40% of a single module.	Single marked, <i>(but moderation needed for GTAs, new staff**, and assessed coursework titles marked by multiple staff)</i>
Performance-based coursework with a non-permanent output that contributes to more than 40% of a single module.	Double marked or team marked, or video/audio recorded or attended by the External Examiner based on 100% coverage of the whole cohort.
Group work with a permanent output	Single marked, <i>(but moderation needed for GTAs, new staff**, and assessed coursework titles marked by multiple staff).</i>
Group work with a non-permanent output that contributes up to and including 40% of a single module.	Single marked, <i>(but moderation needed for GTAs, new staff**, and assessed coursework titles marked by multiple staff).</i>
Group work with a non-permanent output that contributes to more than 40% of a single module.	Double marked or team marked, or video/audio recorded or attended by the External Examiner.

** It is for departments to determine how long moderation needs to continue for a new member of staff.

*** If a department/centre believes it is not possible to second mark a particular form of assessment, then the department/centre must apply for an exemption to this aspect of the University's marking policy and propose an acceptable alternative arrangement for approval by the relevant Dean of the Undergraduate/Graduate School. Where an exemption is granted there is still a requirement for moderation.

EXAMINATIONS	
Undergraduate	
Exams – <u>all preliminary and first year and Exams – beyond first year, but not final year, which are 50% or less of the module mark.</u>	The scripts only need to be single-marked, but all fails must be second-marked and a random sample (10%) must also be moderated. However, where a formal marking schedule is in place it is not necessary to second-mark or sample - but an independent check must be made on all marks calculations. Marking schedules must be reviewed as part of the department's procedures for reviewing draft exam papers.
Exams – <u>beyond first year, but not final year, which are more than 50% of the module mark.</u> and Exams – <u>beyond the first all final year (including PGT exams)</u>	Second-marked except where a formal marking schedule is in place. An independent check on all marks calculations must be made where a marking schedule is used. Marking schedules must be sent with draft exams to the External Examiner for comments and approval.
Postgraduate	
Exams – all.	Second-marked except where a formal marking schedule is in place. An independent check on all marks calculations must be made where a marking schedule is used. Marking schedules must be sent with draft exams to the External Examiner for comments and approval.

Registry, June 2009

(Previous Policy approved by the Graduate and Undergraduate School Boards in June 07.)

Criteria for the nomination of External Examiners (*revised for 2012-13*)

Departments and partner institutions are responsible for nominating suitable external examiners for appointment for all awards. The relevant Dean is responsible for approval of the nominations, which are reported to Faculty Boards.

The nominating department or partner institution must ensure that they have appropriate evidence that a proposed External Examiner meets all the criteria for selection. Where the criteria are not fully met, a written case for an exception must be submitted with the nomination form for consideration by the relevant Dean (see exceptions below).

A – Academic Qualifications and Examining Experience

External Examiners should have

- a) competence and experience in the academic fields covered by the programme
- b) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being externally examined, and any appropriate practical experience.
- c) academic and teaching experience at the level of the modules or award being examined, including designing and operating a variety of appropriate assessment procedures. Examiners may be appointed for their professional or industry knowledge (see exceptions below) but each board must include at least one external examiner with experience and knowledge of UK Higher Education sector standards and benchmarks, and with recent teaching and examining experience.
- d) sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of colleagues
- e) familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be examined
- f) fluency in English¹
- g) met applicable criteria set by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies
- h) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula
- i) competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the learning experience

B – Independence and Impartiality

To ensure impartiality, and that potential conflicts of interest are identified and resolved prior to appointment, departments or partner institutions should **not** nominate anyone to whom the following applies:

- a) previous external examiners for taught schemes (unless exceptional circumstances apply and five years have elapsed since their last appointment).
- b) a member of a governing body or committee of the University or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the University or one of its collaborative partners
- c) close friend or relative of a member of staff or student on the programme of study
- d) anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study
- e) anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study
- f) anyone significantly involved in recent or current collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) or module(s).²
- g) former staff or students of the University or one of its collaborative partners (unless a period of five years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the external examiner have completed their programme)
- h) when a colleague from the same department in the same institution was the previous external examiner for the relevant programme

¹ Where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, additionally fluency in the relevant language.

² The advice of the relevant Dean should be sought where the extent of involvement is in question.

- i) a member of their home institution department is already an external at Essex

C Volume of Work

- a) External examiners are normally appointed for four years. Exceptionally, and to ensure continuity, extension to a fifth year may be approved.
- b) External examiners normally hold no more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any one time.. (External examining of individual candidates for research degrees is not counted for the purposes of this requirement.)
- c) An existing external examiner can hold a role in more than one department at the University (for example where there is overlap in discipline) however the external can only be appointed for four years term from the start of their first appointment. If appointing an existing external, please check whether the term they can serve is sufficient for the award needs. In exceptional cases, the term of appointment can be extended to five years.

D Other

- a) External Examiners should normally reside in the UK. Approval to appoint an Examiner from outside the UK will be granted only exceptionally.

E Exceptions

Where a nominee does not fulfil all the specified criteria (for instance in disciplines which are very small or specialist, or where examiners are drawn from business or a profession) the relevant Dean may consider a request for exceptional appointment. A written case for appointment should be enclosed with the nomination form.

THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TAUGHT COURSE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

N.B. "Award External" is used where the responsibilities are only those of the Award External Examiner

"Module External" is used where the responsibilities are only those of the Module External Examiner. Where responsibilities are those of both Award and Module external examiners, the term "External Examiner" is used.

Introduction

1. The University of Essex has two types of External Examiners, whose roles may be summarised as follows:
 - (a) Award External Examiners. Award External Examiners have overarching responsibility for the standards of the awards to which they are assigned. They are required to attend Boards of Examiners for those awards. Award External Examiners will also be Module External Examiners for the modules in the awards to which they are assigned, but not for any modules to which a separate Module External Examiner is assigned.
 - (b) Module External Examiners. Module External Examiners have responsibility for ensuring the standard of any particular modules to which they are assigned, and will be appointed for their specialist subject knowledge. They do not attend Boards of Examiners unless they are also Award External Examiners.
2. The responsibility for approval of the appointment of External Examiners lies with the Dean of the appropriate Faculty or of Academic Partnerships.
3. The External Examiner System is governed by Ordinance 45 of the University of Essex
4. The names and home institutions of external examiners will be published to students in online course information and handbooks.

Principles governing the role of the Award External Examiners and Module External Examiners

- 1) Every taught award of the University shall have an Award External Examiner.
- 2) All modules that contribute to an award must be allocated to an External Examiner. Responsibility for individual modules must not be allocated to more than one External, but an Award External may have overarching responsibility for this module as part of an award.
- 3) Any one award should not have more than one Award External Examiner. In the case of Joint or Multi-disciplinary awards one Award External should be appointed from the lead department and at least one Module External should be appointed from the other department(s). Exceptions to these principles may be made in special circumstances with the approval of the Dean, in discussion with the PVC (Academic Standards).
- 4) An Award External is appointed to a degree course (or group of cognate degree courses) and any associated sub-degree awards and shall also be responsible for a reasonable proportion of the modules which comprise that award.
- 5) Where appropriate (e.g. Joint or Multi-disciplinary awards), the department will arrange for liaison between the Award External Examiner and the External(s) responsible for the relevant modules that they have not had responsibility for, in order that the Award External Examiner may be assured that there are no areas of concern

which might affect the overall quality and standard of the award. For awards where this is not possible (e.g. Areas awards) the external will have the right to see a sample of work for the purposes of duties A1 and A2 (below) only.

- 6) External examiners shall normally be appointed for a period of four years by the relevant Dean, under powers delegated by the Council, receiving nominations from the departments or partner institutions concerned. Exceptionally, an extension of one year may be granted to ensure continuity. Appointments may be terminated with two months' notice by either party except in the case of breach of contract, or where a conflict of interest comes to light, when a contract may be terminated immediately following completion of the termination procedures. External examiners for taught awards may not be re-appointed for another taught award by the University within five years.
- 7) Factors affecting the number and range of External Examiner appointments in a department include:
 - Workload - quantity of assessed material being examined;
 - Academic diversity of the provision;
 - Capacity of individuals to make competent judgements against external reference points, eg Framework for Higher Education Qualifications;
 - Professional, regulatory and statutory body requirements;
 - Joint and multidisciplinary courses;
 - Diversity of assessments, electronic delivery, performances/presentations, work-based learning.

INFORMATION FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

CORE DUTIES OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

The core duties of an External Examiner at the University of Essex are:

- (A) to comment on the academic standards of the award/module and the quality and coherence of the course;
 - (B) to judge the overall standards of student performance;
 - (C) (for Award External Examiners only) to be a member of and attend examination boards as required and to assess the extent to which the determination of awards is sound and fair;
 - (D) to produce an annual report to the Vice-Chancellor, providing clear feedback in relation to the above, and commenting on the extent to which previous reports have been acted upon, and noting that such reports are made accessible to students.
- (A) Academic standards, assessment procedures, comparability of standards and student achievement
- A1 External Examiners should determine the appropriateness of the academic standards set for the programmes for which they are responsible, considering whether:
- The programme and its component parts continues to be current and coherent and the outcomes are aligned with relevant qualification descriptors set out in the applicable Qualification framework;
 - there is alignment with relevant subject benchmark statements;
 - the standards of the award are commensurate with standards at other higher education institutions with which they are familiar;
 - professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements are being met (where appropriate);
 - assessments in modules of the same level are of comparable standard

- A2 External Examiners should comment on the assessment process, whether it is properly designed and applied, and whether it is carried out in way that is fair and equitable to all students, and supportive of the achievement of learning outcomes. They should consider whether:
- A3 Departments agree with the External Examiner what evidence they require in order to make their comments. Evidence should include the relevant course specifications and student handbook(s). The Award External Examiner is responsible for reviewing the award, including its structure, assessment and the overall profile of student achievement.
- A4 External Examiners are asked to consider the overall standards of student performance by reviewing the classification profile of the cohort and its comparability with achievement at other higher education institutions with which they are familiar. This will involve viewing student work, including reading essays or examination scripts or viewing performances. Samples should be supplied of sufficient size to enable judgement as to whether internal marking has properly assessed performance. Where the cohort is very small, all assessed work should be seen. The external examiner has the right to see the work of any or all students on the programme or module concerned.
- A5 External Examiners are not responsible for or involved in the assessment of individual students. They are not normally in a position to expect or encourage an examination board to raise or lower marks for individual students (this would be unfair to students whose work had not been sampled). Where the External Examiner has concerns about internal marking they should discuss with the internal markers whether it would be more appropriate for the Department to:
- re-mark relevant assessed work for the whole cohort
 - scale the marks for all students.

Where scaling is recommended the Award or Module External Examiner must have the opportunity to have access to all the student work involved (coursework or examination scripts); a run of apparently aberrant marks should not form the basis for a decision to scale without reconsideration of candidates' work.

Departmental decisions on scaled marks will be taken in advance of all relevant meetings of Boards of Examiners. (Particular care should be exercised in respect of joint schemes to ensure that scaling is applied equally to all students on a particular module).

- (B) Good practice, innovation and enhancement of learning opportunities
- B1 External Examiners contribute greatly to the development of our provision and are asked to identify examples of good practice and potential areas for development. These will be reflected upon in annual monitoring reports and at periodic review.
- B2 External Examiners are routinely asked to comment on draft coursework assignments and examination questions, enabling them to inform our current practice in addition to their role in reviewing good practice.
- (C) Examination Board attendance
- C1 The Award External Examiner shall normally be present at any meeting of the Board of Examiners at which recommendations are made for the award of degrees, diplomas or certificates. When, for good reason, this is not possible the Award External's absence must be approved by the appropriate Dean, who shall be informed of:
- (i) the reasons for the request;

- (ii) arrangements to ensure that the Award External Examiner's views are available to the Board in advance of its meeting;
- (iii) arrangements to resolve matters in which the views of the internal Examiners on the Board differ from those of the Award External Examiner;
- (iv) the written agreement of the Award External Examiner concerned.

Where there is not sufficient time to make alternative arrangements for the Board of Examiners the Dean may appoint a suitable substitute.

- C2 Module External Examiners are NOT required to attend examination boards.
- C3 The Award External Examiner is asked to comment on whether the Examination Board operates with fairness. They should be made aware of the outcome of any previous meeting to consider extenuating circumstances relating to the degree class of individual students and they should be satisfied that decisions in this regard are appropriate and consistent.
- C4 The signature of an Award External Examiner must be appended to the marks grid annotated with the decisions of the Examination Board as evidence that they accept the decisions of the Examination Board.
- C5 Decisions as to the classification of a degree and the conferment of a Bachelor's degree shall normally require the consent of the appropriate Award External Examiner. If the Award External Examiner cannot consent, the decision requires the consent of a two-thirds majority of the examination board, including the Chair. The exception to this is when the board is suspended under Regulation 6.26, when the Chair should consult with the Award External before suspending the board..

(D) Annual report to the Vice-Chancellor or a named representative.

- D1 At the end of the examination process the External Examiner shall produce a report summarising their comments. These formal written reports form a key element of the process for maintaining academic standards at the University. The report must be completed using the University's Annual Report Proforma and should be submitted electronically to academicstandards@essex.ac.uk by the appropriate deadline. The report proforma is obtainable either from the University of Essex web resource for External Examiners at: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/> or by sending a blank email to academicstandards@essex.ac.uk with XXSEND in the subject heading box and no text in the body of the message.

Deadlines:

Reports for all awards and, where separate, modules should be submitted four weeks after the final examination board.

The fee will be paid on receipt of the report.

- D2 Where an interim report is required, for example for professional, statutory or regulatory body purposes, this should be submitted directly to the department, with a copy to academicstandards@essex.ac.uk.
- D3 External examiners' annual reports provide clear and informative feedback to the institution on those areas defined for the role in sections A and B above. (the core content).
In addition, their reports will:
 - confirm that sufficient evidence was received to enable the role to be fulfilled (where evidence was insufficient, they give details)
 - state whether issues raised in the previous report(s) have been, or are being, addressed to their satisfaction
 - address any issues as specifically required by any relevant professional body
 - give an overview of their term of office (when concluded).

- D4 External Examiners should be aware that their reports will be sent to any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies associated with the programme
- D5 External Examiners should be aware that their reports will be made available to students via Faculty Boards and Staff Student Liaison Committees (although not published), and that they should not refer directly to individual students or staff.
- D6 Departments will provide external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations as well as outlining ensuing actions in the Annual Monitoring Reports.
- D7 In the exceptional case of any serious concerns, any External Examiners for University of Essex programmes are entitled to write directly to the Vice-Chancellor in confidence on any unresolved matter which concerns them.
- D8 As a last resort, where these concerns are not addressed, are systemic and not a one-off case of ineffective practice, the matter should be raised with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

University of Essex

Fitness to Practise Procedure

Introduction

- 1 All University students are required to comply with the regulations of the University regarding conduct. Students enrolled on courses where a practical professional placement is required (including health, social work and education) have additional responsibilities placed upon them regarding not only their conduct but also their professional suitability, as outlined in relevant regulatory and/or professional body codes of practice. Failure to meet these responsibilities can lead to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure* being invoked. Students will be notified on registration if their course of study is subject to the terms of this procedure.
- 2 The *Fitness to Practise Procedure* applies to all relevant courses leading to awards of the University of Essex, although the office holders identified in Sections A and B below may be adapted where the course is offered through a partner institution of the University.
- 3 The *Fitness to Practise Procedure* is not intended to replace the University's membership and Criminal Records Bureau, disciplinary or academic offences procedures, though the outcome of a case raised under these procedures for a particular student might also raise issues of fitness to practise. Where a conviction, caution or reprimand comes to light as part of the CRB checking process, the matter is considered in accordance with the Student Membership and Criminal Records Bureau Checks Policy and Procedure. Where a student allegedly commits an act that is actionable under the University's disciplinary or academic offences regulations then these procedures must be completed prior to instigating action under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*.
- 4 In the event of concerns that a student may not be suitable for engagement in the relevant profession, the University's *Fitness to Practise Procedure* shall be invoked. A student may at any time be suspended or precluded from further study by the University if a concern is raised under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*.
- 5 Schools/Departments that are running courses where students are subject to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure* will establish a School/Departmental Professional Suitability Group as outlined in appendix 1 of this procedure.
- 6 Concerns about a student's fitness to practise may be raised from any source, including any member of staff, student, placement partner, member of the public, the Occupational Health Service or other agencies such as the Police or Social Services. Concerns about fitness to practise may involve a range of actions or omissions relating to professional conduct or professional suitability but may include any of the following:
 - a) actions that are harmful to service users, other members of the public or service providers
 - b) actions that are likely to constitute an unacceptable risk to the student or others
 - c) failure to disclose information about previous matters relating to their professional suitability prior to registration on the course, including health, previous convictions and cautions
 - d) contravention of the relevant professional code of conduct
 - e) concerns about health³ or well being, including a failure to seek appropriate medical treatment or other support; unreasonable failure to follow medical advice

³ By Health we are not referring to pre-existing medical conditions or disabilities that the student has already disclosed and where reasonable adjustments have been made to enable

or care plans and treatment resistant conditions which might impair fitness to practise

- f) actions that are prejudicial to the development or standing of professional practice.
- 7 This Procedure includes normal timescales. Every effort will be made to expedite the overall process and meet the normal timescales. However sometimes circumstances arise which mean that exceptionally the normal timescales will not be met. In these cases the student will be contacted and informed of the adjusted timescale.

A Procedure for dealing with concerns about a student's fitness to practise

- A1 Concerns about the fitness to practise of a student shall be made in writing to the Professional Suitability Group of the Department/School offering the professional course.
- A2 It must be borne in mind that an allegation raising concerns about fitness to practise is a serious and potentially defamatory one. Consequently it is essential that the proceedings should be conducted on a basis of strict confidentiality.
- A3 On receipt of a written allegation, the Professional Suitability Group, in consultation with the relevant Course Director or equivalent, shall:
- a) take such immediate action as is deemed appropriate in the circumstances to safeguard all relevant parties, but without prejudice to the outcome of the enquiry
 - b) normally within five days of receipt of the allegation shall confirm in writing the nature of allegation made, the action taken under A3 (a) above and the procedures for dealing with the allegation
 - c) normally within ten working days of the receipt of the allegation either:
 - i. decide no further action is required, or
 - ii. appoint an Investigating Officer from the list approved by the Academic Registrar for this role.
- A4 The Investigating Officer shall impartially assemble the evidence relevant to the case in a timely manner. Appropriate methods for gathering evidence will normally include
- Interviewing the student concerned, who may be accompanied by a student or other member of the University, the relevant partner institution or the Students' Union if he or she wishes. The interview can be conducted by telephone if appropriate.
- and may include:
- Interviews with relevant University staff, students, professional or practice partner colleagues
 - Obtaining a written professional opinion on the effect of the student's behaviour or state of health/well-being on their fitness to practise
 - Obtaining other relevant documents and other information
 - Obtaining information about the student's progress on the course.
- A5 The Investigating Officer shall prepare a written report for the Professional Suitability Group, normally within fifteen working days of the case being referred to him/her. The report shall not pass judgement nor recommend a particular course of action.
- A6 If the Professional Suitability Group deems that no *prima facie* case has been made they shall inform the student in writing.
- A7 If the Professional Suitability Group deems that a *prima facie* case has been made against the student, they shall refer the case as expeditiously as possible to a Fitness to Practise Committee which shall be appointed, normally within five working days, by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Standards). The Committee shall normally comprise the following, but will also conform to the requirements of the relevant professional and/or regulatory body:

the student to access their study. Cases will be considered where disability prevents the student meeting the core competences after adjustments have been considered or made or where this has implications for the safety of the student, patients, service users or colleagues

- a) a Dean or Associate Dean who has had no previous involvement with the case as Chair
 - b) two members of academic staff from the relevant subject discipline within the School who have had no previous involvement in the case
 - c) one practising member of the relevant profession who is from outside the University and who has not been associated with teaching the student.
- A8 The Secretary of the Fitness to Practise Committee shall be the Academic Registrar or his/her representative.
- A9 The Professional Suitability Group shall submit to the Secretary of the Fitness to Practise Committee all relevant evidence, including the report of the Investigating Officer, and a case summary. The Secretary shall convene a meeting of the Committee as soon as possible and send copies of the evidence to the members of the Committee and at the same time to the student concerned a minimum of ten working days before the meeting.
- A10 The student should submit to the Secretary of the Fitness to Practise Committee any papers for the consideration of the Committee at least five working days before the meeting.
- A11 All representations to the Fitness to Practise Committee should be submitted in writing. Exceptionally the Committee may ask for witnesses to attend in person.
- A12 The student will normally be required to attend the meeting of the Fitness to Practise Committee in person. In the event of their non attendance, without very good reason, the Committee meeting will continue in their absence.
- A13 If the student wishes, they may bring to the Committee meeting a student or employee of the University, the relevant partner institution or the Students' Union to help him/her in presenting his/her case to the Committee.
- A14 The Head of Department/School or another member of the Departmental/School Professional Suitability Group will attend the meeting of the Fitness to Practise Committee to set out evidence relating to the concern. The Head/member of Professional Suitability Group should not propose or comment on any outcome or penalty which might be imposed.
- A15 The Head/Professional Suitability Group member is not a member of the Committee and can only attend when the student is present (not before and after). Head/Professional Suitability Group member is not permitted to ask questions of the student during the meeting except through the Chair
- A16 The Fitness to Practise Committee will operate on the principle of 'the balance of probability' rather than that of 'beyond reasonable doubt'.
- A17 The conduct of the Fitness to Practise Committee is at the discretion of the Chair but shall normally proceed as follows:
- a) The members of the Committee have a preliminary discussion without the student, the student's representative or the Head/Professional Suitability Group member being present.
 - b) The student, the student's representative and the Head/Professional Suitability Group member enter the room and the Chair introduces all those present.
 - c) The Chair checks that the student has received details of the concern and any supporting documentation.
 - d) The Chair explains the order of proceedings to the student.
 - e) The evidence relating to the concern about fitness to practise is then presented by the relevant Head or member of the Professional Suitability Group, and members of the Committee, the student and the student's representative are invited to put questions to them.

- f) The Chair then invites the student to put forward a case orally if he or she wishes to do so including any mitigation, and members of the committee (but not the Head) are invited to put questions to the student.
 - g) The Chair invites the student's representative to put forward any additional statement.
 - h) Exceptionally the Committee has the power to call witnesses who shall only attend to present their evidence and to answer questions that the Committee or other party may put to them through the Chair. Once their evidence has been heard and there are no more questions, witnesses shall be required to withdraw
 - i) The Chair invites the student to make any final response.
 - j) The student, the student's representative and the Head/Professional Suitability Group member are then asked to leave the room. The Committee then deliberates and comes to a decision. If the Committee is unable to reach a decision then the Committee may be adjourned.
 - k) If the Committee finds on the balance of probability that the case is proven, they determine any further action or sanction, clarifying the reasons for the choice of penalty.
 - l) The student is then recalled to the room and is told the decision, the reason for the decision and details of any further action or sanction if appropriate. The Head /Professional Suitability Group member may be present during this final stage.
- A18 Only members of the Committee and the Secretary shall be present while a Committee is reaching a decision on the outcome, or on any penalty or other action
- A19 The Committee shall have the power to seek such other evidence as it deems necessary. The Committee may be adjourned to allow for such evidence to be gathered
- A20 If the Committee decides that the fitness to practise concern is unproved, it will dismiss the case
- A21 If the Committee decides the fitness to practise concern is proven then it shall have the power to do any one or combination of the following:
- a) Permit the student to continue on the course with no further action required
 - b) Permit the student to continue on the course with adjustments
 - c) Issue a formal warning
 - d) Discontinue the placement and institute arrangements for locating an alternative placement if this is permitted under the Rules of Assessment
 - e) Require the student to intermit from the course for a defined period of time with return subject to conditions
 - f) Require the student to withdraw from the course because they are unfit to practise
 - g) Impose such other penalty as it considers appropriate, provided that no such penalty requires or implies a concession or exemption under the Rules of Assessment
- A22 The Secretary shall confirm to the student and the Head of Department/School concerned in writing within five working days the decision, the reason for the decision and details of any sanction or further action. The student shall be informed of the right to appeal against the decision in accordance with Section B (below).
- A23 If the fitness to practise case against the student is found proven, the Head of Department/School and the Academic Registrar shall decide whether a report should be made to the relevant professional or regulatory body and/or the student's employer, if applicable. The student will be informed in writing whether such a report will be made.

B Procedure for Appeals against Decisions of the Fitness to Practise Committee.

- B1 Written notice of appeal by the student must be lodged with the Academic Registrar within five working days of the student being informed of the decision by the Fitness to Practise Committee.
- B2 In the event of an appeal, the Academic Registrar and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Standards) shall decide whether the grounds for the appeal are covered by the provisions of paragraph B5 below and warrant further consideration by a Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee. If they agree that there are no grounds for further consideration of the appeal, the Academic Registrar shall inform the student in writing giving the reasons for that decision.
- B3 If the Academic Registrar and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Standards) decide that the appeal does warrant further consideration, the Academic Registrar shall refer the case to a Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee which shall be appointed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Standards) and which shall normally comprise:
- a) a Chairman who shall be from a different Faculty from that relevant to the course
 - b) one member of staff from the relevant subject and professional discipline within the Faculty concerned who shall not be the Head of Department/School or the Investigating Officer or a member of the Professional Practice and Conduct Committee
 - c) one senior practising member of the relevant profession who is from outside the University and who has not been associated with the teaching of the appellant.
- B4 The Secretary of the Committee shall be the Academic Registrar or his/her representative.
- B5 The grounds for the appeal shall be one or more of the following:
- a) that new evidence had become available that could materially affect the Fitness to Practise Committee's decision
 - b) that there was evidence of procedural irregularity or prejudice or bias in the conduct of the hearing by the Fitness to Practise Committee.
- B6 The Committee shall have before it all documents relating to the original hearing, together with a written statement submitted by the student setting out the grounds for the appeal. The Committee shall not proceed by way of a re-hearing, but shall have power to require the presentation of such further evidence as it deems necessary.
- B7 The Committee shall have the same powers as the Fitness to Practise Committee and may confirm the decision of the Fitness to Practise Committee or substitute such other decision as it considers appropriate.
- B8 When the Committee has reached its decision, the Secretary shall inform the student and the Head of Department/School concerned in writing.
- B9 If any action had been taken under paragraphs A23 above to inform the relevant professional or statutory bodies and/or the student's employer, the Head of Department and the Academic Registrar shall decide whether any further report should be made to the professional or statutory bodies and/or the student's employer concerned in the light of the decision of the Committee.
- B10 The decision of the Fitness to Practise Appeals Committee shall be final.
- B11 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provides an independent course for the review of student complaints or appeals. When the University's internal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals have been exhausted, the University will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. Students wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity of an independent review by the OIA must submit their application to the OIA within three months of the issue of the

Completion of Procedures letter. Full details of the course are available on request and will be enclosed with the Completion of Procedures.

Kirstie Sceats
Academic Officer (Health Courses)
Registry
May 2012

Guidelines on the Operation of a Departmental Professional Suitability Group

- These guidelines are only relevant for Departments/Schools that are running courses where a professional or regulatory body has concerns for a student's fitness to practise. These students will be subject to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*.
- Any concerns raised under the Fitness to Practise Procedure, will initially be made to a Departmental/School Professional Suitability Group so all relevant Departments/Schools will need to establish such a group.
- There are a number of different policies and procedures where the outcome for a particular student might raise issues of fitness to practise. These procedures operate separately from each other but there is a need for them to be considered as a whole in assessing a student's suitability for practice.
- Information on Academic Offences cases, Disciplinary cases and Progress cases will be reported to the Professional Suitability Group with the Department/School.
- The Professional Suitability Group will receive and consider reports from all the relevant sources and then make appropriate referrals
- Professional Suitability Groups will vary in operation dependent on the needs of the department/school and the relevant professional/regulatory bodies.
- In departments/schools which run courses for which it is a requirement, the Professional Suitability Group will consider all students who need to be 'signed off' as being of good character as part of their programme of study and will make the appropriate report to the Board of Examiners.
- Departments/schools must ensure that students are informed of the operation of the departmental Professional Suitability Group and other processes relating to fitness to practise. This information should appear in student handbooks.

Constitution of a Professional Suitability Group

- The constitution of the Professional Suitability Group will vary in operation dependent on the needs of the department and may need to take account of the requirements of relevant professional/regulatory bodies. The membership of the group may vary dependent upon the reason it has been convened.
- The minimum requirements for membership of the group are:
 - The Head of School/Department will chair the group
 - There shall be at least two other members
 - A majority of the members of group should be members of staff working on courses where the students are subject to the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*
 - Other individuals may be co-opted into the group as appropriate. This may include, for example, the Programme Lead for a particular student under consideration or a member of staff with a particular clinical or professional background relevant to the case under consideration

Remit of the Professional Suitability Group

The Professional Suitability Group will:

- only consider students who are on programmes which are subject to *Fitness to Practise Procedure*

- have a remit to consider any report submitted to it as part of the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*
- will, where relevant, consider any student on courses where students are required to be signed off as being of good character as part of their course, and either confirm to the Exam Board that there are no issues to raise, or deal with any issue arising under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*
- be a central point, established at Departmental/School level, to which the outcomes of a number of different processes can report. These are: Disciplinary procedures, Academic Offences Procedures, outcome of Progress Committee, Exam Board. It might also consider reports from Occupational Health, Student Support, or reports made directly from a placement.
- Have the referral powers as outlined under the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*

Operation of group

- The Professional Suitability Group will meet on an ad hoc basis, and may meet 'virtually, to consider any referral made as outlined in the *Fitness to Practise Procedure*, keeping to the appropriate timescale where required.
- For programmes where it is a requirement, the Professional Suitability Group will also need to meet before relevant exam boards, to review all students on the programmes to verify professional suitability and make referrals if necessary
- A record should be kept of all cases considered by the Professional Suitability Group, noting decisions made.

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS POLICY

This policy applies to admission in October 2013.

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all admissions⁴ to full-time undergraduate programmes at the University's campuses in Colchester, Loughton and Southend. It covers all stages of an applicant's interaction with the University from initial enquiry through application, receipt of the University's selection decision and the transition to first ~~enrolment~~ enrolment-registration and induction for successful applicants.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY

The Undergraduate Admissions Policy is approved by the Senate. Implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the Deputy Director (Admissions), Communications & External Relations.

REVIEW OF POLICY

Monitoring and review of the Undergraduate Admissions Policy is undertaken annually by the Admissions Sub-Committee, which reports to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

The University of Essex recognises the value of diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity. It aims to provide an environment in which applicants are treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their abilities, merits and potential.

The University of Essex is committed to fair access and encourages applications from all students who are able to demonstrate the potential to meet the entry criteria for the relevant course and to benefit from study at undergraduate level. Individual applicants are considered on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and affiliations or other irrelevant distinction. The University's admissions policies and procedures are designed to ensure that all applications are considered fairly and consistently and in accordance with professional standards.⁵

The University acknowledges the principles and precepts governing good admissions practice set out by the Schwartz Report⁶ and in Section 10 of the Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice⁷. The University welcomes the recognition by Schwartz and the QAA of the autonomy enjoyed by higher education institutions in making admissions decisions and of the need to exercise judgement in making such decisions. Against this background the University of Essex Undergraduate Admissions Policy is intended to provide a policy and procedural framework within which admissions decision-making is characterised by transparency, fairness and consistency.

The University strives to observe the rules and procedures set down by UCAS, the good practice guidance provided by SPA⁸ and to comply with all relevant legislation in relation to its undergraduate admissions activity.

⁴ All applications received via UCAS.

⁵ Extract from UoE *Widening Participation Strategic Assessment*, submitted to HEFCE December 2009.

⁶ Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice ('The Schwartz Report') Admissions to Higher Education Review, September 2004 <http://www.admissions-review.org.uk/>

⁷ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-10.aspx>
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section10/default.asp>

⁸ *Supporting Professionalism in Admissions* <http://www.spa.ac.uk/>

SECTION 1 – MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT

The University is committed to the provision of comprehensive, open and consistent messages in its marketing and recruitment information, and to the management of activity which leads to the admission of students to the University in ways that are fair, clear and explicit and implemented consistently.

Ensuring consistency is important especially in relation to the very wide range of different countries, in the EU and beyond, in which the University undertakes marketing and recruitment activities.

The University's marketing and recruitment messages are promulgated through promotional materials and activities which we aim to ensure are accurate, relevant, current, and accessible in order to provide information that will enable applicants to make informed decisions about their options.

Marketing and recruitment activities include:

- participation at education exhibitions
- collaboration with partner institutions
- working with agents who represent us around the world
- on-campus Open and Visit Days.

Marketing and recruitment information is communicated via a number of different media and includes:

- printed prospectuses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels
- the University website (www.essex.ac.uk) which includes specific pages for international students (www.essex.ac.uk/international)
- an International Prospectus which is specifically aimed at non-EU applicants
- social and new media.

Marketing and recruitment and admissions staff maintain a strong working relationship in order to ensure a holistic approach that is informed by the principles set out in the Undergraduate Admissions Policy.

SECTION 2 – EDUCATION OUTREACH AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The University is committed to widening participation and fair access and fosters an inclusive and diverse environment for study, providing opportunities for study to individuals who are able to demonstrate the potential to meet the entry criteria for the relevant course and to benefit from study at undergraduate level, regardless of their background. The University's Education Outreach team is engaged in a range of activity targeted at students from groups that are under-represented in higher education, which aims to raise awareness, increase attainment and suitably prepare students for entering and undertaking study in higher education. Our pre-education outreach activity includes:

- information and advice in schools and colleges
- campus visits for students in primary and secondary education
- summer schools
- individual mentoring
- targeted support for specific groups such as mature students and care leavers.

The University aims to deliver a cohesive approach to widening participation and fair access, which is expressed in its Access Agreement, the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment and the Undergraduate Admissions Policy. Widening participation, outreach and admissions staff maintain a strong working relationship with appropriate representation on formal University committees, to ensure that the admissions policy and education outreach and widening participation strategy are mutually informed, and to maintain a holistic approach to access.

Education outreach activity is informed by the principles set out in the Undergraduate Admissions Policy.

SECTION 3 - ADMISSIONS

The University operates a centralised undergraduate admissions function for all applications received via UCAS. Applications are processed by a team of Admissions Advisers who act as the principal contact for applicants throughout the admissions process. ~~However, selection decisions are the responsibility of academic Admissions Selectors.~~ Selection decisions are made by Admissions Selectors, who may be members of academic staff or members of the central Undergraduate Admissions team.

RESPONSIBILITY OF APPLICANTS IN ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Applicants are expected to:

- provide complete and honest information in applications submitted to the University
- respond in a timely manner to requests for further information from the University
- communicate any changes to the information originally supplied in their application as soon as possible
- be courteous and respectful in their communications with University staff involved in admissions.
-

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

1. Academic requirements

All undergraduate applicants are required to meet the University's General Entrance Requirements as set out in University Regulations ([Section 1](#)). Entry requirements are normally expressed in terms of three A level grades, but they may also be expressed in terms of the minimum UCAS tariff points required for individual courses. Course-specific entry requirements are published annually in the undergraduate prospectus, on the University website and via the UCAS website. Academic entry requirements are reviewed annually and are determined by academic departments following consultation with the Deputy Director (Admissions), and members of the Marketing & Recruitment and International Office teams. Entry requirements may include specific subjects and attainment at GCSE and A level or equivalent.

2. English language competence

Applicants whose native language is not English and who have not been educated in an English-speaking environment (country and/or institution) are required to achieve a minimum overall score of IELTS 6.0 or equivalent to be admitted to a first year undergraduate course. The minimum entry requirement for direct entry to the second year of an undergraduate course is IELTS 6.5 or equivalent. A lower English requirement may apply to foundation level study. Approval of English language requirements is the responsibility of the Admissions Sub-Committee. The University accepts a range of English language qualifications as being equivalent to IELTS.

3. Publication of entry requirements

Entry requirements are normally determined around two years before the proposed point of admission, e.g. by January ~~2011-2012~~ for October ~~2012-2013~~ entry, and are published in the printed undergraduate prospectus. The University reserves the right to amend its entry requirements up to 12 months before the proposed point of admission. Amended entry requirements will be published on the University website and the UCAS website.

4. Acceptable qualifications

The University accepts a wide range of qualifications from UK applicants, including A and AS level, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge Pre-U, BTEC qualifications, Level 3 Advanced Diplomas, Access courses (approved by the Quality Assurance Agency), Open University qualifications and a range of professional qualifications.

A wide range of EU and other international qualifications is also accepted. The equivalence of such qualifications to Level 3 UK awards will be evaluated in accordance with independent national guidance provided by UK NARIC, UCAS and other recognised sources. The Head of Undergraduate Admissions is responsible for undertaking such evaluations in consultation with Admissions Selectors and the International Office team, and for maintaining the University's *Guide to International Qualifications* for use by Academic Selectors and Admissions Advisers.

5. **Verification of qualifications**

The University will normally verify the result of any qualification that is not received from UCAS through the Awarding Bodies Linkage (ABL). Applicants may be required to submit evidence of results before they are permitted to ~~enrol~~ register at the University.

SELECTION

6. **Initial checks**

All applications are subject to an initial check on receipt by the Admissions Adviser. The initial check will identify applications which require specific attention (see section on *Consideration of Additional Data in Selection and Offer-Making*, paragraphs 16 to 26 below), in order to ensure that they are dealt with in accordance relevant procedures. On completion of the initial checks the application will be submitted to the ~~academic~~ Admissions Selector, who will make the selection decision.

7. Applications from individuals who do not meet the University's General Entrance Requirements may be rejected at the initial check stage. In borderline cases such applications will be referred to the Head of Undergraduate Admissions who will determine whether the application should be submitted to the ~~academic~~ Admissions Selector for consideration. If the Admissions Selector recommends that an offer should be made, the application will be submitted to the Dean of the relevant Faculty, who is responsible for determining whether the General Entrance Requirements may be waived.

8. **Selection decision**

In accordance with the University's commitment to fair admissions, each application is considered individually by an ~~academic~~ Admissions Selector, who will determine whether an offer should be made on the basis of academic achievements to date, predicted academic achievement and other evidence of the applicant's ability and potential to complete the course for which s/he has applied. This includes evidence of the applicant's motivation, skills, experience and attitude, as expressed in his/her personal statement and the academic reference. The Admissions Selector may take into account any extenuating circumstances which have affected an individual applicant when deciding whether an offer should be made.

9. The University does not currently use contextual data in making selection decisions at the point of application. ~~However, extenuating circumstances disclosed in the UCAS application will be considered by the Admissions Selector when deciding whether an offer should be made.~~

10. **Interviews, auditions and other evidence**

Some departments invite all applicants who are based in the UK at the time of application to attend an interview or workshop, which provides an opportunity for applicants to meet one or more members of academic staff in order to provide a mutually beneficial assessment of their suitability for the course. Applicants who are not invited to attend for an interview will receive equal consideration. However, the University reserves the right to reject applications from applicants who are invited to attend an interview and who do not respond to one, or exceptionally two, specific invitations to attend.

Applicants to East 15 Acting School are required to undertake an audition as part of the selection process.

Applicants to NHS-funded courses in the School of Health and Human Sciences are required to attend an interview and to complete specific tests in accordance with requirements published by the relevant NHS authority.

Applicants to specific courses may be required to provide a portfolio for assessment by the Admissions Selector. Such requirements are set out in the University's prospectus and will be communicated to relevant applicants direct.

OFFER-MAKING

11. Communication of offer

Where the University decides to make the applicant an offer, this is communicated to applicants via UCAS Track and in writing by letter from the University. The offer letter will set out any conditions that the applicant must meet.

12. Conditions of offer

The offer letter sets out the specific entry requirements that the applicant must achieve in order for his/her place to be confirmed. The offer will be expressed in terms of A level grades or the equivalent for applicants who are taking alternative qualifications. Where appropriate the offer will include the English language requirement that the applicant must achieve in order for his/her place to be confirmed.

The University normally makes the Standard Conditional Offer (SCO) for the course. However, Admissions Selectors may make a lower offer in individual cases, in accordance with the published admissions policy for the department or subject in question.

The offer letter may also set out non-academic conditions that the applicant must meet before admission to the course can be confirmed. These may include satisfactory completion of a Criminal Records Bureau check and an occupational health check.

13. Applicants made an alternative offer

In cases where the applicant is deemed unlikely to achieve the entry requirements for the course for which s/he has applied but where an alternative course is available, a 'change of course offer' may be made.

14. Unsuccessful applicants and feedback

Where the University decides that an offer cannot be made, this is communicated to applicants via UCAS Track. Admissions selectors are required to record the reason(s) for not making an offer in each individual case. ~~Feedback is provided to unsuccessful applicants on request to the Undergraduate Admissions Office (admit@essex.ac.uk).~~ University aims to provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants in accordance with published policy.

15. Discontinuation or suspension of courses

The University reserves the right to discontinue or suspend a course for which offers have already been issued, but undertakes to do this in exceptional circumstances only. Where a course is discontinued, applicants holding offers are informed as soon as possible, and where possible and appropriate, are offered a place on an alternative course offered by the University.

CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA IN SELECTION AND OFFER-MAKING

16. **Applicants with disabilities**

Applicants who declare a disability in their application are referred to the University's Student Support team, which may issue advice and guidance or, where appropriate, make an assessment of the applicant's reasonable adjustment needs and what arrangements may be necessary to enable students to meet the course requirements. In individual cases Student Support may invite applicants for an interview to support the assessment process. The Student Support assessment of applications from students who declare a disability takes place independently of the academic selection process, which is based entirely on academic merit and takes place in accordance with standard policy.

17. **Mature applicants**

Applications from mature students, formally defined as students over the age of 21, are welcomed and will be given equal consideration with all other applications.

18. **Applicants who will be under 18 at the time of entry to the University**

In accordance with University regulations, applicants who will be under 18 at the time of entry will be required to comply with University child protection procedures. Such applicants will be required to complete the relevant under 18s form satisfactorily, providing parental/guardian approval and details of a UK-based emergency contact who is over the age of 21, before their place is confirmed ~~an offer of admission is made~~.

19. **Deferred entry**

Applications for deferred entry are welcomed and will be given equal consideration with applications for entry in the admissions cycle in question.

20. **Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning**

Applicants wishing to be considered for entry to the second year of study, or wishing to import credits or evidence of prior learning into the course for which they are applying, will be considered in accordance with the University's policy on Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning.

21. **Applicants requesting re-admission**

Applicants who have previously withdrawn from study at the University, and who wish to be re-admitted, will be considered in accordance with the University's policy on the re-admission of students.

22. **Applicants admitted under specific education outreach programmes**

The University may admit applicants under specific programmes designed to encourage applications from students who have experienced educational disadvantage. Such programmes include specification of additional consideration that may be given to applicants during the admissions process.

23. **Applicants admitted under specific link agreements**

The University may admit applicants to specific degree courses under link agreements with overseas institutions. Link agreements include specification of the entry requirements for admission to the relevant year of the relevant degree course.

24. **Assessment of applicant fee status**

Applicants are required to declare their fee status when they complete their UCAS form, selecting from a number of options including UK home, EU or overseas (non-EU) fee status. The Admissions Adviser checks information in the UCAS application relating to fee status, including the nationality, country of residence, address and declared fee status of each applicant. Where the combination of information provided suggests that the fee status declared by the applicant may be incorrect, the University carries out a fee status assessment. Fee status assessments are carried out by trained members of admissions staff in accordance with UK fees and awards regulations and guidance provided by the UK Council for International Student Affairs (www.ukcisa.org). The University does not exercise discretion when determining applicants' fee status.

The University reserves the right to amend an applicant's fee status after the formal offer has been issued, where information provided for the purpose of the initial fee status assessment has been withheld or misrepresented.

~~The tuition fees for the first year of the course of study, together with the Confirmation of the applicant's fee status, are included in the offer letter issued to the applicant.~~

25. **Fraudulent applications, including similarity detection in personal statements**

Applications submitted via UCAS are subject to the anti-fraud procedures and checks carried out by UCAS. All personal statements submitted via UCAS are subject to the UCAS similarity detection procedure. Where a personal statement contains significant similarities to another previously submitted to UCAS the University is notified of this and of the extent of the similarity.

All applications highlighted by the UCAS Similarity Detection Service are sent to the Admissions Selector for consideration. If the Admissions Selector wishes to make a conditional or unconditional offer, the applicant ~~is~~ may be invited to submit a revised personal statement by a specific date, normally within two weeks of the request. On receipt of the revised personal statement the application will be scrutinised by the Admissions Selector and a selection decision will be made in accordance with standard procedures. In these cases, Admissions Selectors will give particular attention to the personal statement. If a revised personal statement is not received from the applicant by the specified deadline, the application will be forwarded to the Admissions Selector for consideration, together with the similarity detection report received from UCAS. The Admissions Selector will exercise his/her discretion in light of the evidence received and will make a selection decision accordingly.

26. **Declaration of criminal convictions**

Applicants are required by UCAS to declare criminal convictions that are not spent at the time of application. If the Admissions Selector recommends that an offer be made, such applications will be referred for consideration in accordance with the University's Student Membership and Criminal Records Bureau Checks Policy. Formal offers of admission will only be made following consideration of the conviction and application in accordance with the Policy. Application of the Policy takes place independently of the academic selection process, which is based entirely on academic merit and takes place in accordance with standard admissions policy.

Applicants for specific courses, such as NHS-funded courses, may be required to declare spent criminal convictions and will be notified of this required where appropriate.

CONFIRMATION

27. Consideration of applicant results

The University considers the results of all applicants who are holding a Conditional Firm (CF) or Conditional Insurance (CI) place before deciding whether to confirm an applicant's place. A level results and the results of some other qualifications are automatically provided to the University by UCAS. In the case of results not provided by UCAS, it is the applicant's responsibility to provide the Undergraduate Admissions Office with evidence of the results of academic and English language qualifications. The University reserves the right not to confirm an applicant's place if he/she does not provide evidence of having met the conditions of his/her offer by the published deadline (normally 31 August).

28. Verification of results

The University reserves the right to verify all results by receiving and checking original certificates prior to confirming an applicant's place and/or permitting ~~enrolment~~ registration with the University. Where possible, English language test results will be verified with the qualification awarding body (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL, Pearson ~~etc~~).

29. Applicants holding CF offers

On receipt of the applicant's results Undergraduate Admissions staff check to see if the conditions of the offer have been met. Where they have, the place is confirmed and UCAS is informed that the applicant's status is now Unconditional Firm (UF). Where the applicant's results have fallen short of the conditions of the offer by a narrow margin, i.e. the applicant is a 'near miss', the applicant's place may be confirmed at the discretion of the Head of the relevant department and subject to the availability of places. Where an applicant falls into the 'near miss' category, contextual data relating to the applicant's ~~personal~~ circumstances may be considered, for example, ~~extenuating circumstances that may have affected academic performance,~~ or the educational context in which the applicant has been studying. This may include reference to the performance of the school or college in relation to national benchmarks, such as the percentage of students achieving five GCSEs with grades A*-C.

30. Applicants holding CI offers

The confirmation process for applicants holding CI offers is the same as for applicants holding CF offers. However, where the place is confirmed UCAS is informed that the applicant's status is now Unconditional Insurance (UI). Applicants whose status is UI only become UF where their first choice University (their original CF choice) rejects them at Confirmation.

31. Communication of Confirmation Decisions

All applicants holding CF or CI offers are informed of the University's confirmation decision in writing by letter, regardless of whether they have successfully secured a place or not.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

There is no right of appeal against the University's selection decision. However, complaints about the admissions process may be directed to the Director of Communications and External Relations. Complaints should be made in writing within 14 days of the relevant University decision, e.g. to reject an application or not to confirm an applicant's place. Complaints will normally be considered to be valid only where there is evidence of procedural irregularity, including failure to adhere to the Undergraduate Admissions Policy.

TRAINING OF STAFF INVOLVED IN ADMISSIONS

Admissions Advisers and Admissions Selectors are required to undertake training when they are new to the role. Training is the responsibility of the Head of Undergraduate Admissions. Regular briefings for both Admissions Advisers and Admissions Selectors take place during the admissions cycle, with a particular focus on identifying and sharing good practice.

DATA PROTECTION AND COMMUNICATION WITH THIRD PARTIES

The Undergraduate Admissions Office aims to operate in compliance with data protection legislation and good records management practice. Applicants' data is treated as confidential by all staff involved in the admissions process and is not divulged unnecessarily or inappropriately. In accordance with University policy, staff involved in admissions communicate only with applicants themselves, unless the applicant has given express permission for a third party to communicate on his/her behalf. Third parties may be parents, teachers, advisers or agents acting on behalf of applicants.

SECTION 4 - ~~ENROLMENT~~ REGISTRATION AND INDUCTION

The University aims to provide a comprehensive academic and pastoral induction programme in order to support the transition of applicants to registered students at the end of the admissions process. Before arrival at the University applicants are provided with information about registration with the University and academic enrolment and induction activities. This will normally include: information about events provided by academic departments and the Students' Union; services provided by Student Support; arrangements for English language assessment and English language support classes, where appropriate; and general study skills provision, as well as information about good practice in academic writing, such as effective referencing and advice on how to avoid plagiarism.

Where appropriate, applicants will be provided with information about optional modules that are available to them and will be invited to select optional modules online in advance of their arrival at the University.

Prior to arrival students also have the opportunity to activate their University of Essex e-mail and IT account which provides access to additional resources and immediate internet access in University accommodation upon arrival. It also allows students to receive specific e-mail communications about arrangements and events during the first week of term.

Updated June 2012
Joanne Tallentire
Deputy Director (Admissions), CER

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS POLICY

This policy applies to admission in October 2013

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all admissions to full and part-time postgraduate⁹ taught courses and research degrees at the University's campuses in Colchester, Loughton and Southend. It covers all stages of an applicant's interaction with the University from initial enquiry through application, receipt of the University's selection decision, and the transition to first ~~enrolment~~ registration and induction for successful applicants. It does not cover admission to modular study at postgraduate level.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY

The Graduate Admissions Policy is approved by the Senate. Implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the Deputy Director (Admissions), Communications & External Relations.

REVIEW OF POLICY

Monitoring and review of the Graduate Admissions Policy is undertaken annually by the Admissions Sub-Committee of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

The University of Essex recognises the value of diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity. It aims to provide an environment in which applicants are treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their abilities, merits and potential.

The University of Essex is committed to fair access and encourages applications from all students who are able to demonstrate the potential to meet the entry criteria for the relevant course and to benefit from study at postgraduate level. Individual applicants are considered on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and affiliations or other irrelevant distinction. The University's admissions policies and procedures are designed to ensure that all applications are considered fairly and consistently and in accordance with professional standards.

The University acknowledges the principles and precepts governing good admissions practice set out in Section 10 of the Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice¹⁰. The University welcomes the recognition by the QAA of the autonomy enjoyed by higher education institutions in making admissions decisions and of the need to exercise judgement in making such decisions. Against this background the University of Essex Graduate Admissions Policy is intended to provide a policy and procedural framework within which admissions decision-making is characterised by transparency, fairness and consistency.

The University strives to comply with all relevant legislation in relation to its graduate admissions activity.

⁹ This includes Graduate Certificate and Diploma courses, which are graduate in time, but not in level. Use of the term 'postgraduate' in this document is intended to be inclusive of provision at graduate as well as postgraduate level. Graduate level study is defined as equivalent to Honours level (6) by the Quality Assurance Agency in its National Qualifications Framework; for further details, see: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx>

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/default.asp#p4.3>

¹⁰ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-10.aspx>

SECTION 1 – MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT

The University is committed to the provision of comprehensive, open and consistent messages in its marketing and recruitment information, and to the management of activity which leads to the admission of students to the University in ways that are fair, clear and explicit and implemented consistently.

Ensuring consistency is important especially in relation to the very wide range of different countries, in the EU and beyond, in which the University undertakes marketing and recruitment activities.

The University's marketing and recruitment messages are promulgated through promotional materials and activities which we aim to ensure are accurate, relevant, current, and accessible in order to provide information that will enable applicants to make informed decisions about their options.

Marketing and recruitment activities include:

- participation at education exhibitions
- collaboration with partner institutions
- working with agents who represent us around the world
- on-campus Open and Visit Days.

Marketing and recruitment information is communicated via a number of different media and includes:

- printed prospectuses at undergraduate and graduate levels
- the University website (www.essex.ac.uk) which includes specific pages for international students (www.essex.ac.uk/international)
- an International Prospectus which is specifically aimed at non-EU applicants
- social and new media.

Marketing and recruitment and admissions staff maintain a strong working relationship in order to ensure a holistic approach that is informed by the principles set out in the Graduate Admissions Policy.

SECTION 2 - ADMISSIONS

The University operates a centralised Graduate admissions function for all direct applications, which are processed by a team of Admissions Advisers in the Graduate Admissions Office, who act as the principal contact for admissions purposes.¹¹ Applications may also be made by agents, who act on behalf of applicants, and these may be received and processed initially by teams who are responsible for maintaining relationships with agents.

The selection of students for admission is the responsibility of the Dean of the Graduate School (for research students) and Heads of Department¹² for taught students. The Dean delegates the selection of research students to Heads of Department and in practice selection is further delegated to ~~Graduate Directors, Course Directors or Research Directors~~ Admissions Selectors, who may be members of academic staff or members of the central Graduate Admissions team. The exact arrangements vary according to the organisational structure of the department and the variety of provision within the subject. ~~These in Members of academic staff in~~ a selecting role are supported by the post of Graduate Administrator, who will liaise with the relevant Admissions Adviser to ensure that selection decisions are made and reported in a timely manner and with access to appropriate resources and reference materials.

The International Office may select applications received from agents for taught courses, on behalf of the relevant Head of Department, if the department has entered an agreement with the International Office for selection purposes.

¹¹ This function may be delegated to academic departments by agreement with the Deputy Director of Communications & External Relations (Admissions)

¹² The term department is used generically in this document and includes academic Schools and Centres of the University.

The Graduate Admissions Office is responsible for checking and approving the offer and conditions, and for issuing the formal University offer document. The offer document is binding on the University. Once an offer has been made, the Graduate Admissions Office is responsible for further formal communications with the applicant.

RESPONSIBILITY OF APPLICANTS IN ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Applicants are expected to:

- provide complete and honest information in applications submitted to the University
- respond in a timely manner to requests for further information from the University
- communicate any changes to the information originally supplied in their application as soon as possible
- be courteous and respectful in their communications with University staff involved in admissions.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

1. Academic requirements

Applicants for postgraduate study must meet the admissions criteria as set out in University Regulations and any course-specific entry requirements, which are published annually in the Graduate prospectus and on the University website. Entry requirements are reviewed annually and may include achievement in specific subjects and/or the submission of specific items with the general application.

2. English language competence

Applicants whose native language is not English and who have not been educated in an English-speaking environment (country and/or institution) are required to achieve a minimum overall IELTS score and, where specified a minimum score in the writing component of the IELTS test, to be admitted to a postgraduate taught course or research degree. The minimum overall IELTS score for admission to a taught postgraduate course is 6.5 for the majority of courses, but exceptions to this apply and are published on the University website. The minimum overall IELTS score for admission to a research degree is normally 7.0. Approval of English language requirements is the responsibility of the Admissions Sub-Committee. The University accepts a range of English language qualifications as being equivalent to IELTS.

3. Publication of entry requirements

Entry requirements are normally revised no later than 12 months before the start of the academic year in which admission is sought and are published in the printed Graduate prospectus. The University reserves the right to amend its entry requirements before the proposed point of admission. Amended entry requirements will be published on the University website. Applicants already holding offers at the time of the change will be admitted in accordance with the terms of the existing offer unless the new requirements are in favour of the applicant, in which case a revised offer will be issued automatically.

4. Acceptable qualifications

The University accepts Bachelors and Masters degrees from UK, EU and overseas institutions where the status of the institution and its degree awarding powers can be verified. The equivalence of other qualifications, including professional qualifications and non-UK qualifications, to level 6 of the UK qualifications framework (an Honours degree)¹³ and the equivalence of non-UK grading systems to the UK classification system will be evaluated in accordance with independent national guidance provided

¹³ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/The-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx>

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/default.asp#p4.3>

by UK NARIC and other recognised sources including the World List of universities. The Head of Graduate Admissions is responsible for undertaking such evaluations in consultation with the International Office team, and for maintaining the University's *Guide to International Qualifications* for use by Academic Admissions Selectors and Admissions Advisers.

5. **Verification of qualifications**

Applicants are required to submit evidence of their academic achievement to date at the point of application. Evidence of the award of a Bachelors or higher degree must be provided at the confirmation stage, if not already verified during the admissions process, and before any request to firmly accept a place will be approved. the applicant's place is confirmed.

SELECTION

6. **Assessment of Applications**

All applications are subject to an initial check on receipt by the Admissions Adviser. The initial check will identify applications which require specific attention, in order to ensure that they are dealt with in accordance with relevant procedures. The initial check will also verify that the applicant's existing academic achievements are from institutions which can be verified as acceptable in accordance with paragraph 4. above. The Admissions Adviser will request further evidence or clarification from the applicant if there is insufficient information for the application to be forwarded for selection. On completion of the initial checks the application will be submitted to the relevant Graduate Administrator, who will arrange for the Academic passed to the Admissions Selector to make the selection decision.

7. Applications from individuals who do not meet the University's admissions criteria for postgraduate study as set out in University Regulations and who do not demonstrate compensating professional experience may be rejected at the initial check stage. Applications where there is uncertainty about the level of existing academic achievement will be referred to the Graduate Admissions Manager who will determine whether the application should be forwarded for selection.

8. **Selection Decision**

In accordance with the University's commitment to fair admissions, each application is considered individually by an Academic Admissions Selector, who will determine whether an offer should be made on the basis of academic achievements to date, future academic achievement as indicated by transcripts and references and other evidence of the applicant's ability and potential to complete the course for which s/he has applied. This includes evidence of the applicant's motivation, skills, experience and attitude, as expressed in any personal statements and references.

9. **Interviews, auditions and other evidence**

Interviews are not part of the standard admissions procedure except for pre-registration taught ~~masters~~ Masters courses in the School of Health and Human Sciences. Applicants for NHS-funded courses may also be required to complete specific tests in accordance with requirements published by the relevant NHS authority. Details of the selection of candidates for interview and the role of the interview and any tests in the selection process are contained in the Departmental Graduate Admissions Statement.

If an Academic Admissions Selector for a research degree feels that the final decision of whether supervision can be offered needs to be informed by a conversation with the applicant, an interview may be arranged.

Applicants to East 15 Acting School are required to undertake an audition as part of the selection process.

Applicants to specific courses may be required to provide a sample of academic work. Such requirements are set out in the University's Graduate prospectus and will be communicated to relevant applicants within the application form.

OFFER-MAKING

10. Communication of Offer

The ~~Academic Admissions~~ Selectors in each subject area are responsible for proposing offers to suitably qualified applicants. The proposed offers are reviewed by the Graduate Admissions Manager ~~or Graduate Admissions Coordinator~~, on behalf of the relevant Head of Department/ (taught courses) or the Dean of the Graduate School (research degrees) before being issued to applicants online via the *myEssex* applicant portal. Applicants are advised by email that an offer has been published.

11. The University aims to respond to all applicants with a decision within three weeks of receipt of a complete application for taught courses and within six weeks for research degrees.

12. Conditional Offers

An offer of a place to an applicant who has still to demonstrate achievement of either an academic or English language entrance requirement will be a conditional offer. The condition specified will be attainable by the applicant and will ensure that the University's minimum entrance requirements for Higher Degrees and any specific course requirements are satisfied.

The conditions of the offer will specify the minimum level of achievement and the level, subject area and awarding institution of the award which needs to be completed.

~~IELTS and TOEFL~~ Normally English language test results ~~need to~~ must be dated within two years of the date of admission to be valid. The English language condition will be expressed in a standard format, according to the departmental requirement. The condition will be expressed as an IELTS score unless the applicant has submitted previous TOEFL or PTE (Academic) scores. Applicants that have a valid IELTS (or equivalent) score that is less than or equal to 1.0 band below the entrance requirement for their course or research degree will be offered a Pre-sessional English Pathway at the University as a route to achieving the English language entrance requirement.

13. Unconditional Offers

An offer of a place to an applicant who has already demonstrated achievement of both the academic and any English language entrance requirements will be unconditional. The applicant is not required to demonstrate any further achievement in order to be admitted to the University.

14. Research Degree Offers

Departments are responsible for determining that the following two aspects of research study are appropriate before proposing an offer for a research degree:

- Supervisory capacity
- Field of research

The University aims to provide the name of the prospective supervisor in the offer letter, wherever possible.

For overseas students in Biological Sciences, Health & Human Sciences, Computer Science & Electronic Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, the Graduate Admissions Office will include a summary of the research area of approx 200 words in the offer in order that applicants can apply for “Academic Technology Approval” from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

15. Alternative Course or Research Degree Offers

The Academic Admissions Selector may determine that the applicant’s academic objectives will be best met by taking a course or research degree which is different from that stated in the application. This will be communicated in the formal offer letter issued to the applicant.

16. Tuition Fees and Fee Status

The tuition fees for the course of study or for the first year of the course if the course is longer than one year, together with the applicant’s fee status are included in the offer letter issued to the applicant. If the fee for the course and start date in question is not yet known, this is stated together with the current fee for information only.

17. Request to Defer an Offer

The University will not automatically grant a request to defer an offer to a subsequent date of entry. Requests from applicants to defer an offer will be considered by the admitting department or centre, and are subject to the availability of modules and academic staff in the future.

The Graduate Admissions Office will approve all proposals from departments for deferred offers and will check that the status and text of the offer remain appropriate, amending them if necessary. If the entrance requirements have changed since the issue of the initial offer, a deferred offer will be based on the entrance requirements currently in force.

The Head of Graduate Admissions reserves the right to refuse a deferred offer if there is evidence to suggest that the applicant is not genuine in their intention to study at postgraduate level with the University of Essex.

18. Unsuccessful Applications and Feedback

Where the University decides that an offer cannot be made, this is communicated to applicants via *myEssex*. ~~The University does not routinely provide feedback in respect of unsuccessful applications. The University aims to provide feedback to all unsuccessful applicants in accordance with published policy. Applicants can request feedback by writing to the Graduate Admissions Office (pgquery@essex.ac.uk).~~

19. Discontinuation, Suspension or Change of Title of Courses

The University reserves the right to discontinue or suspend a course for which offers have already been issued, but undertakes to do this in exceptional circumstances only. Where a course is discontinued or suspended, applicants holding offers are informed as soon as possible, and where possible and appropriate, are offered a place on an alternative course at by the University. Where the title of a course is changed, applicants holding offers are informed as soon as possible of the change.

CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA IN SELECTION AND OFFER-MAKING

20. Applicants with Disabilities

Applicants who declare a disability in their application are referred to the University’s Student Support team, which may issue advice and guidance or, where appropriate, make an assessment of the applicant’s reasonable adjustment needs and what arrangements may be necessary to enable students to meet the course

requirements. In individual cases Student Support may invite applicants for an interview to support the assessment process. The Student Support assessment of applications from students who declare a disability takes place independently of the academic selection process, which is based entirely on academic merit and takes place in accordance with standard policy.

21. Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning

Applicants seeking recognition for prior or experiential learning are handled in accordance with the University's Procedure on AP(E)L. If the AP(E)L request is approved, the offer will note the volume of credit which has been accredited and the changes to the applicant's planned course structure and tuition fee which result from the approval.

22. Applicants requesting re-admission

Applicants who have previously withdrawn from study at the University, and who wish to be re-admitted, will be considered in accordance with the University's policy on the re-admission of students.

23. Applicants admitted under specific link agreements

The University may admit applicants to specific degree courses under link agreements with overseas institutions. Link agreements include specification of the entry requirements for admission to the relevant course.

24. Assessment of Fee Status

~~The University has two fee levels for its taught courses and research degrees: the Overseas Fee and the Home/EU Fee. The University publishes a summary of the eligibility criteria for Home/EU Fee status in the Graduate Prospectus and issues guidance to all applicants with their offer. The Graduate Admissions Office is responsible for determining fee status at the point of application based on the information within the application.~~

The Graduate Admissions Office is responsible for determining an applicant's fee status, which will normally be UK (home), EU or Overseas (non-EU), from information provided within the application. If an applicant's fee status is not clear at the point of offer, the applicant record will be set to show Overseas fee status and the applicant will be issued with a Fee Status Questionnaire and explanatory letter. Fee status assessments are carried out by trained members of admissions staff in accordance with UK fees and awards regulations and guidance provided by the UK Council for International Student Affairs (www.ukcisa.org). The University does not exercise discretion when determining applicants' fee status.

The University reserves the right to amend an applicant's fee status after the formal offer has been issued, where information provided for the purpose of the initial fee status assessment has been withheld or misrepresented.

25. Fraudulent applications

The validity of documents submitted with postgraduate applications is checked by trained staff in the Graduate Admissions Office. Where possible and appropriate the validity of a document submitted will be checked with the issuing authority. English language reports for IELTS, TOEFL and the Pearson Test of English are verified using providers' online services.

26. If discrepancies in documentation are identified at the selection stage, no offer will be made and a record will be kept on the Graduate Admissions database for future reference. A letter is sent from Graduate Admissions to the applicant informing him/her that their application has not been successful due to discrepancies in their

documentation. If an applicant already holds an offer and submits fraudulent documentation at the confirmation stage, the offer is withdrawn.

27. **Declaration of criminal convictions**

Applicants are required to declare criminal convictions that are not spent at the time of application. If the Admissions Selector recommends that an offer be made, such applications will be referred for consideration in accordance with the University's Student Membership and Criminal Records Bureau Checks Policy. Formal offers of admission will only be made following consideration of the conviction and application in accordance with the Policy. Application of the Policy takes place independently of the academic selection process, which is based entirely on academic merit and takes place in accordance with standard admissions policy.

Applicants for specific courses, such as NHS-funded courses, may be required to declare spent criminal convictions and will be notified of this required where appropriate.

CONFIRMATION

28. **Firm Acceptance of Places**

The University requires each applicant to firmly accept an offer if they wish to take up a place. An applicant may only firmly accept one offer for a given start date. To firmly accept, an applicant must provide evidence that ~~they~~ he/she has ~~have~~ met all the conditions stated in the offer and declare a source of funding for the period of study.

29. Applicants that have not met the conditions stated in their conditional offer may still be admitted to the University if the relevant department wishes to make a case to the Dean who has the authority to waive standard entry requirements in individual cases.

30. Applicants with full or part sponsorship must provide documentary evidence of the sponsorship. Graduate Admissions will then allocate each applicant a status of "self-funded" or "funded", the latter indicating that the tuition fee income will be paid by a recognised organisation that the University will invoice after the point of Registration. The Income Office is responsible for assessing the status of such organisations.

31. ~~Applicants~~ Applicants whose fee status is 'Overseas' and who are regarded as self-funded must pay their first instalment of tuition fees in advance in order to receive the University's sponsorship for immigration purposes. The University has a published Tuition Fee Deposit Policy.

32. Applicants that have provided evidence of funding/have paid a deposit and have met all the conditions stated in the offer are categorised as "Firm Accepts" and are regarded as "expected students".

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

There is no right of appeal against the University's selection decision. However, complaints about the admissions process may be directed to the Director of Communications and External Relations. Complaints should be made in writing within 14 days of the relevant University decision, e.g. to reject an application or not to confirm an applicant's place. Complaints will normally be considered to be valid only where there is evidence of procedural irregularity, including failure to adhere to the Graduate Admissions Policy.

TRAINING OF STAFF INVOLVED IN ADMISSIONS

Admissions Advisers are required to undertake training when they are new to the role. Training is the responsibility of the Head of Graduate Admissions. Selectors are required to have received the Handbook for Graduate Admissions and to make use of the Handbook in their role. The Graduate Directors attend termly meetings, which are chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School. These meetings are used by the Head of Graduate Admissions to brief Graduate Directors on any changes to admission procedures which may impact upon selection duties in their department, as well as to identify and share good practice.

DATA PROTECTION, INCLUDING COMMUNICATION WITH THIRD PARTIES

The Graduate Admissions Office aims to operate in compliance with data protection legislation and good records management practice. Applicants' data is treated as confidential by all staff involved in the admissions process and is not divulged unnecessarily or inappropriately. In accordance with University policy, staff involved in admissions communicate only with applicants themselves, unless the applicant has given express permission for a third party to communicate on his/her behalf. Third parties may be parents, teachers, advisers or agents acting on behalf of applicants.

SECTION 3 – ~~ENROLMENT~~ REGISTRATION AND INDUCTION

33. General Induction

The University aims to provide a comprehensive academic and pastoral induction programme in order to support the transition of applicants to registered students at the end of the admissions process. Before arrival at the University applicants are provided with information about registration with the University and academic enrolment and induction activities. This will normally include: information about events provided by academic departments and the Students' Union; services provided by Student Support; arrangements for English language assessment and English language support classes, where appropriate; and general study skills provision, as well as information about good practice in academic writing, such as effective referencing and advice on how to avoid plagiarism.

Where appropriate, applicants will be provided with information about optional modules that are available to them and will be invited to select optional modules online in advance of their arrival at the University.

Prior to arrival students also have the opportunity to activate their University of Essex e-mail and IT account which provides access to additional resources and immediate internet access in University accommodation upon arrival. It also allows students to receive specific e-mail communications about arrangements and events during the first week of term.

34. Induction for Research Students

The Graduate School provides a Doctoral Welcome Conference in week 1 and ~~All~~ All new doctoral students are invited, ~~together with students from Writtle College.~~ Mini Doctoral Welcome Conferences are run early in the Spring and Summer terms, subject to numbers, for students that have an offer of study starting mid year. The Doctoral Welcome Conferences are designed to help research students to feel both part of a cohort and of a broader research student community. They also provide some initial skills development to assist students with planning their work and managing their relationships with their supervisors.

Updated June 2012
Joanne Tallentire
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