

B1. The Admission of Students

B1.1 General Principles

- 1.1.1 All programmes of study admission regulations shall be prepared in accordance with these Institute Regulations and such guidance and/or requirements as the Academic Board may from time to time determine.
- 1.1.2 There should be a reasonable expectation that any person admitted to a programme of study will be able to fulfil the objectives of the programme and achieve the standard required for the award.
- 1.1.3 Definitions of the standards of the Institute's awards are contained in Section A1.2 of Volume One of the Academic Handbook together with 'benchmark' entry requirements for each award. The required aims and objectives in relation to the achievement of the standards of awards are described in Section B2.2. Further evidence on entry requirements and qualifications is given in Sections B1.2, 1.3 and 1.4. However, the Institute recognises the principle of equivalence whereby there are a wide variety of alternative criteria for considering whether or not a person is capable of being admitted to an individual programme of study, rather than a single compulsory entry requirement. Individual programmes of study will therefore be expected to define their admissions policy and criteria as part of their validated regulations.
- 1.1.4 Regulations for individual programmes of study will describe the knowledge and skills required for admission as well as the range of entry qualifications which will be considered as qualifying a person to be considered for admission.
- 1.1.5 In considering individual applicants for admission to a programme of study, evidence should be sought of personal, professional and educational experiences that provide indications of ability to meet the demands of the programme. It is important that the arrangements for admissions ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants and take into account the Institute's Equal Opportunity policy. Programmes should monitor their admissions policies and practices to ensure that equality of opportunity is provided for all applicants.
- 1.1.6 The Institute accepts in principle in terms of its mission to widen access that applicants who may not have the recognised standard qualifications for entry on to a programme of study

may, nonetheless, through work or life experience, have sufficient potential and commitment to succeed on it (see B1.2.5 and B1.2.6).

B1.2 **Admission to Undergraduate Programmes of Study** The following sections include details of a variety of qualifications and experience which may be offered by applicants.

1.2.1 **Benchmark Qualifications**

The definitions of awards at undergraduate level in Part A of Volume One, Section A1.2, use as a benchmark the normal minimum level of attainment expressed in terms of GCSE and A-level passes. These benchmarks are defined for first degrees and for higher diplomas and certificates in 1.2.2. and 1.2.3. below.

1.2.2 The normal minimum level of attainment required for entry to the start of programmes leading to awards at first degree level is equivalent to passes in two subjects at Advanced Level supported by passes in three other subjects at GCSE. (A 'pass' in GCSE means Grade C or above; this is equivalent to a pass at grade E or above in GCE Ordinary level or a pass at grade 1 in CSE. Two A/S-level passes will be regarded as equivalent to 1 A-level pass).

1.2.3 The normal minimum level of attainment required for entry to the start of programmes leading to awards at higher diploma and higher certificate level is equivalent to a pass in one subject at A-level, supported by passes in three other subjects at GCSE. (A 'pass' in GCSE means Grade C or above; this is equivalent to a pass at grade E or above in GCE Ordinary level or a pass at grade 1 in CSE. Two A/S-level passes will be regarded as equivalent to 1 A-level pass).

1.2.4 It will be the responsibility of all programmes of study to define precise admissions criteria and acceptable initial entry qualifications as part of their validated regulations. In doing so they may specify precise requirements and levels of attainment expected of applicants but must also bear in mind the general intellectual qualities developed by previous study. A variety of forms of preparation should be considered as evidence of an applicant's potential to succeed in a programme of higher education study.

1.2.5 **Vocational and other qualifications**

The Institute will recognise a variety of vocational and other

qualifications which will be deemed to be equivalent to the academic qualifications for initial entry noted in paragraphs 1.2.2. and 1.2.3. The following qualifications will specifically be recognised as equivalent for the purpose of general Institute entry requirements, but entry on to an individual programme of study will be subject to the specific admissions regulations established for the programme:

- BTEC National Diploma
- International Baccalaureate
- Irish Leaving Certificate
- Scottish Higher Certificate
- General National Vocational Qualifications (Advanced GNVQs - Level 3 - A-level equivalent, Intermediate GNVQs - Level 2 - GCSE equivalent)
- National Vocational Qualifications (Level 3 in specific subjects)
- Open University Foundation programme
- Access Courses (normally credit-rated at Level 4 and validated by an approved access course recognition body)
- Foundation Courses in Art and Design (for programmes in Art and Design)

1.2.6 **Other Learning and Experience**

In determining the suitability of an applicant for admission, programmes may consider other forms of evidence, for example from Records of Achievement which may or may not be associated with formal qualifications. Entrants may be admitted on the basis of uncertified learning and experience, involving assessment of an applicant's knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the demands of a particular course. Institutional policy and procedures in relation to the assessment of such prior uncertificated learning are defined in Section B1.4 below and in Part D of Volume One of the Academic Handbook, Credit Accumulation and Transfer Regulations, Section 6.3. The Institute's policy on the implementation of procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning is further defined in the document, Assessing Prior Learning: Guidelines and Procedures (Part A of Volume Five of the Academic Handbook).

1.2.7 **Admission to Degree Programmes**

The following criteria shall be used to determine admission requirements to extended degree programmes:

- i. successful completion of A-level or equivalent in a subject area outside the subject specification to be undertaken;
- ii. mature students who demonstrate suitability to study at HE level by evidence of interview and/or successful completion of a programme of pre-entry preparation and diagnostic testing;
- iii. students with non-successful completion of study at A-level or equivalent within the desired subject area specialism who successfully complete a programme of pre-entry preparation and diagnostic testing.
- iv. other applications will be considered on individual merit in the light of the Institute's reasonable expectation that the student will be able to fulfil the objectives of a specific programme and attain the standard required for the particular academic award.

B1.3 Admission to Postgraduate Programmes

1.3.1 Master's Courses

The normal entry requirement for a Master's course is an Honours degree or a postgraduate diploma or a professional qualification recognised as being equivalent to an Honours degree. Other qualifications or experience which demonstrate that a candidate possesses appropriate knowledge and skills at Honours degree standard may be acceptable.

1.3.2 Postgraduate Diploma Courses

The normal entry requirement is a degree or other qualification together with appropriate experience or, exceptionally, substantial related experience alone, may be acceptable.

1.3.3 Postgraduate Certificate in Education

Candidates should hold either a degree or an equivalent advanced professional or vocational qualification and, if they wish to teach in schools, GCSE passes in English and Mathematics. (This requirement will also hold for students accepted under the APL/ APEL procedure).

1.3.4 Accreditation of Prior Experience

An applicant's prior uncertificated learning may be assessed for entry to postgraduate courses using the guidelines contained in Section B.1.4. below and Section 6.3 of Volume One, Part D of the Academic Handbook (Regulations and Procedures Governing the Operation of the Institute's Credit Accumulation

and Transfer Scheme). Further detailed advice is available in the Institute's policy document, Assessing Prior Learning: Guidelines and Procedures (Part A of Volume Five of the Academic Handbook).

B1.4 Admission with Academic Credit and Credit Transfer (see also Volume One, Part D, Regulations and Procedures Governing the Operation of the Institute's Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme).

1.4.1 Applicants may be admitted on to a programme of study with academic credit if they are able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled some of its progression and assessment requirements by means other than attendance and will be able, by completing the remaining requirements, to fulfil the objectives of the programme and attain the standard required for the award. The applicant may be admitted as a student to an appropriate point in a particular programme of study.

1.4.2 In exercising their discretion in this respect, those responsible for admissions should be rigorous in ensuring that such admissions with academic credit accord with the principles and guidelines contained in the Institute's Credit Accumulation and Transfer Regulations (Part D of Volume One of the Academic Handbook, Section 6.3).

1.4.3 Subject to the requirements of the relevant programme regulations, applicants may be admitted to a programme of study with exemption from certain elements of the programme based on specific credit granted in respect of their prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning. Specific credit for prior learning may also include the transfer of marks/grades for such learning in order to be counted towards the programme to which the candidate has been admitted and the award to which it leads.

1.4.4 **Maximum Credit and Exemption** (See also Paragraph 6.7.2 of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Regulations, Academic Handbook Volume One, Part D)

Normally, a student may only be admitted to a programme with a maximum of prior credit amounting to 50% of the total credit points required for the award sought, or up to halfway through a taught programme. However, where a student already holds a higher education award from this or any other institution which falls within the recognised tariff defined in Paragraph 6.3.2. of the Institute's Credit Accumulation and Transfer Regulations, full credit may be given for previous study beyond the maximum of 50% and the applicant may be admitted to the appropriate stage of a particular programme. Evidence of the previous study and credits/grades achieved should be obtained from the applicant's

previous institution in such cases.

1.4.5 Transfer from one programme to another

Students may transfer from one programme to another within the institution and may be credited for their prior study.

1.4.6 Transfer from another Institution

In general, it shall be possible for applicants who have successfully completed the whole or part of a degree or other programme of higher education at an appropriate institution in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, to be admitted with specific credit at an appropriate point on a programme of study. Such admissions shall be reported to the Academic Standards Committee as part of the annual monitoring report (stage 1) and shall be based upon the tariff defined in Paragraph 6.3.2 of the Institute's Credit Accumulation and Transfer Regulations (Part D of Volume One of the Academic Handbook) or be subject to an approved agreement on credit recognition covering specific programmes of study and awards offered at other institutions.

It must be clearly recorded at the point of entry in a "contract" exchanged between the Institute and the student what credit has been granted, including any marks to be transferred to the new programme.

1.4.7 The Assessment of prior experiential learning

Applicants may be admitted to the Institute's programmes of study with specific credit for prior experience. The procedures and policy relating to such admissions are defined in the Institute's Credit Accumulation and Transfer Regulations (Part D of Volume One of the Academic Handbook) and in the Institute's policy document, Assessing Prior Learning: Guidelines and Procedures (Part A of Volume Five of the Academic Handbook).

The following general principles should be applied in all cases:

- i. responsibility rests with the applicant for making a claim to have acquired knowledge and skills and for supporting the claim with appropriate evidence. Assistance may be given in preparing individual claims;
- ii. the learning derived from experience must be identified in order to be assessed;
- iii. the identification of prior learning comes through systematic reflection on experience, the writing of clear

statements about what was actually learned and the collation of evidence to support those statements;

- iv. the learning to be claimed must be of an appropriate standard and be up to date and relevant to the course concerned.

1.4.8 Industrial experience, training and supervised work experience

An applicant may be judged to have satisfied, wholly or in part, the aims of supervised work experience on a programme if they are able to present evidence of relevant prior experience. In considering such applications, the following will be taken into account:

- i. the quality of training or supervised work experience previously undertaken;

- ii. the relevance of that training or supervised work experience to the programme to which the student is to be admitted;
- iii. the quality of the supervision and assessment of the training or supervised work experience;
- iv. whether the granting of such specific credit would still enable the student to meet professional or other requirements which the supervised work experience within a programme is intended to satisfy.

In cases of sandwich awards specific credit shall normally be limited to half the placement requirements of the programme. Where the sandwich award leads to the award of the BEng degree or degree with Honours or to the award of the MEng degree, specific credit may not be granted for supervised work experience undertaken outside the programme except in the case of transfer between equivalent programmes.

1.4.9 **BTEC and SCOTVEC Higher awards**

Applicants holding a Higher National Certificate or Diploma of BTEC or SCOTVEC in a relevant subject area may be considered for admission with specific credit, normally to the start of the second year of a full-time three year programme or the equivalent stage of a part-time programme. Entry at points beyond the start of the second year may be considered under the following circumstances:

- i. if a student has performed outstandingly well in BTEC/SCOTVEC assessments (ie. has achieved a defined number of merits/distinctions acceptable to a particular degree programme) or, if a student's programme of study is particularly well-matched to an individual degree course, they may be considered for admission with specific credit normally for up to half of the second year of a degree course (180 credits) or the equivalent stage of a part-time course.
- ii. if a degree course has been specifically designed to build on BTEC or SCOTVEC HND/C qualifications and makes provision for entry direct to the third year, HND/C students may be admitted directly to the third year (or its part-time equivalent) provided that they have satisfactorily completed assessments equivalent to those required for progression from the second to the third year of the course (or its part-time equivalent).

B1.5 **The Registration Status of Students**

1.5.1 Students who are accepted on to programmes of study at the Institute shall remain registered with the Institute normally for a period equivalent to approximately twice the defined length of their approved programme of study. Such registration shall be conditional upon compliance with the Institute's General Regulations and the making of satisfactory progress on a programme of study. If a student has failed to complete a programme of study within the defined period of registration including the repeat of any referred or deferred assessments (in the timescales specified by individual programme regulations) they must apply to the Head of Academic Affairs and for permission to be granted an extended period of registration. Permission will only be granted where there is good reason for an extension to be considered. If a student is left with no route open to complete his/her programme of study and/or obtain its final award, he/she shall be required to withdraw from the programme of study. In such circumstances the student's registration with the Institute shall be cancelled.

1.5.2 The normal periods of student registration with the Institute for taught programmes will be:

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| Full-Time Degree Student | : | Six Years |
| Part-Time Degree Student | : | Eight Years |
| Full-Time Extended Degree or Sandwich Student | : | Eight Years |
| Full-Time Higher Diploma Student | : | Four Years |
| Part-Time Higher Diploma Student | : | Six Years |
| Full-Time Masters Student (taught course) | : | Three Years |
| Part-Time Masters Student (taught course) | : | Five Years |

Registration periods will include any intercalation of study by the student which must be formally approved by the programme authorities and reported to the Academic Standards Committee.

1.5.3 **Associate Students**

Students may register as Associate Students of the Institute where they intend to take only a part of an approved programme without necessarily completing the assessment requirements which are part of the award to which the programme leads. If they do complete the assessment requirements satisfactorily they may make use of the credit gained towards an award of the Institute providing they follow an approved programme of study.