



## EDUCATION MANUAL

**D: Learner Support**

**Chapter: D: LEARNER SUPPORT**

**Section: D4: Admissions**

**Classifications: Policy and Procedures**

**Title: D4.1 Admissions Policy**

**Author: Registry**

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## 1. Overall Aim of Policy

The Admissions Policy is designed to ensure that those offered a place at SRUC have a realistic chance of success on their chosen programme and have equal opportunity at application to demonstrate potential. It aims to provide transparency in SRUC's admissions process and decision making.

Through its admissions procedures, SRUC seeks to identify those applicants who will benefit from, and can be reasonably expected to achieve, the award for which they have applied. It recognises that this cannot necessarily be judged from academic performance alone and consideration will therefore be given to an applicant's life experiences, demonstrated aptitude for the chosen course, aspirations and related skills.

SRUC aims to provide an enabling and safe environment for students to achieve their academic potential and SRUC's Admissions processes are designed to ensure an appropriate means by which the SRUC community is protected.

The Policy, together with any supporting guidance, complies with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, UCAS operating requirements and relevant validating university and other awarding bodies' regulations. SRUC's policies for Contextual Admissions, Equality, Inclusion and Taught Tuition Fees also apply. The Higher Education sector good practice identified by the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) initiative and Advance HE (previously Equality Challenge Unit) has also been incorporated.

SRUC welcomes, values and seeks a diverse student body and proactively supports applications from Scottish, Rest of the UK, EU and International students. SRUC welcomes applications from underrepresented groups. It is an active member of Scotland's Schools into Higher Education Programme (SHEP) and other Scottish widening access initiatives.

## 2. Scope of Policy

This Policy is concerned with the admission to SRUC's taught academic portfolio which includes full-time or part-time programmes at SCQF level 4 to level 11. Application is normally made through UCAS or the SRUC online application system and applies to applicants from and out with the UK.

This Policy excludes short course provision where applicants register for individual modules, CPD, training provision and work-based learning courses. Aspects of this policy will be relevant to these courses they will be referred to in other policies and procedures as appropriate.

### 3. Management of Admissions

The SRUC Admissions service is managed by Academic Registry. For admissions purposes, the Academic Registrar is the designated Head of Admissions and is accountable to the Academic Director for decisions taken. The routine decision making, and administration of the admissions process is undertaken by the Admissions Team led by the Admissions Lead.

The UCAS service is used for all applications to SRUC's full-time Higher Education (HE) undergraduate programmes. Applicants can submit applications to UCAS from the beginning of September in the year preceding entry. UCAS deadlines and procedures are adhered to and incorporated into SRUC's operating processes.

All other applications are dealt with by SRUC's direct application process. Deadlines and operating procedures which meet the requirement of this Policy are in place. Applications are made online via the SRUC website from mid-October in the year preceding entry.

#### 3.1 Entry Requirements

Admissions criteria are publicly accessible from the SRUC website (<http://www.sruc.ac.uk/courses>), the relevant prospectus and for undergraduate admissions on the UCAS website: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). This includes information related to English language requirements for those applicants whose first language is not English. Information provided is accurate at the time of issue and aims to provide applicants with the details they require in order to make an informed decision about their future study choices.

SRUC considers a wide range of qualifications for entry purposes.

In addition to academic qualifications, all applicants must provide a personal statement including information on their academic background and general interests, as well as motivation for their chosen subject.

Applicants who do not meet the minimum academic criteria but who have significant and relevant experience in their chosen subject may be considered for the offer of a place.

Applicants may be offered an alternative programme of study if they do not meet the minimum entry requirements for their chosen programme.

Applicants who do not meet the minimum academic criteria but who fall under one or more contextual indicators may be considered for the offer of a place. (Further details are available in SRUC's Contextual Admissions Policy).

SRUC has standard minimum entry qualifications (both in terms of achievement and subject area). These are approved by the Academic Board and published for guidance purposes. Subject specific requirements are confirmed at the validation of the programme.

### **3.2 Decision Making**

SRUC reserves the right to request grades higher than the published standard minimum requirements to assist its selection processes.

Application decisions will be made by appropriately qualified staff, including members of the Admissions Team and designated academic staff.

Applications presenting alternative qualifications and/or experiential learning will be considered by designated academic staff as appropriate.

Decisions for all full-time Higher National and Degree applications are transmitted to the applicant via UCAS.

Decisions for direct applications will be sent direct from SRUC to applicants by email.

Operating processes for the consideration of all types of applications are in place.

### **3.3 Interviews**

Interviews may be used as a means to inform academic selection across SRUC's programmes, including for advanced entry. Please contact the Admissions Team for further details.

The interview is a two-way process to agree the best match of future study to individual learning needs. An interview checklist is used to ensure that all key areas are covered. Additional issues may be explored at interview as appropriate to the individual programme requirements.

Applicants who are unable to attend an interview due to financial hardship or support requirements please contact the Admissions Team to discuss support/alternative arrangements.

### **3.4 Selection**

Offers for places are based upon the evidence and anticipated ability of the applicant to succeed on the chosen programme. The ability to succeed is judged through the consideration of actual and anticipated academic success, the applicant's motivation for the course and evidence of commitment to the subject area. As such, an applicant's personal statement and reference are key sources of information.

For some course areas, SRUC is required to remain within requirements set by professional statutory and regulatory bodies with regards to entry requirements and applicant characteristics which may affect ability to succeed (including Section 3.8 for Veterinary Nurses).

SRUC, as a Scottish Higher Education Institution, has a set number of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) places available each academic year. These are currently allocated to Scottish domicile citizens. These applicants, who have their fees fully funded by the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS), are included within SRUC's fundable numbers.

SRUC is permitted to offer additional places to applicants from the rest of the UK (RUK), British Islands, EU countries and those from overseas. These students are not funded by the SFC and appropriate fees are in place. Fees information is available on the SRUC website ([www.sruc.ac.uk/courses-training/useful-information/fees-funding](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/courses-training/useful-information/fees-funding)). The number of offers made by SRUC each year is carefully managed.

In the event that SRUC is oversubscribed by applicants eligible for SFC funding, a selection process will take place. A proportion of offers may be made prior to UCAS' January deadline for full time undergraduate places. The remainder will be made after this date to ensure fair consideration.

### **3.5 Decisions, Responses and Communication**

SRUC aims to process applications quickly and effectively. All applications are acknowledged on receipt.

Applicants are required to provide all the information requested before a decision can be made.

Applicants applying for full time HE courses will receive the outcome of their application via UCAS.

Applicants applying directly to SRUC will receive the outcome of their application directly from SRUC by email.

SRUC continues to accept and process applications following UCAS' January deadline for undergraduate Home/EU/RUK full-time students, where places remain available. This is indicated by the programme remaining open for applications on the UCAS website. International applications may be accepted to the end of June, allowing for UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) requirements (see also section 3.9).

Exceptionally, changes may be required to be implemented at short notice to programme content or structure. Where the changes are deemed to significantly impact on the future students' experience of the programme, SRUC will write to all applicants holding offers of admission to advise of the changes and, if applicable, to offer an alternative programme of study.

Applicants who choose to accept their offer of a place are sent additional information prior to the start of their course, which provides essential advice and guidance to prepare students for the start of their studies.

### **3.6 Fee Status**

Applicants are required to select their 'residential category' from a number of options. This information forms the basis for a decision regarding the resident fee status of an applicant.

If SRUC is unclear from the information provided on the application form by the applicant which Resident Fee Status an applicant should be, admissions staff will send a 'Fee Status Enquiry' form to the applicant for completion. On return of this completed form an applicant's fee status is set.

### 3.7 Criminal Convictions

SRUC has a duty of care to its students and staff. If an applicant wishes to discuss any unspent convictions before submitting an application, please contact the Admissions Team by email ([admissions@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@sruc.ac.uk)).

In addition, applicants to certain programmes where their studies will require regulated work with children and/or vulnerable adults will be required to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme through Disclosure Scotland. This is administered by SRUC when required. Where a PVG Scheme record reveals a conviction, which impacts upon a prospective student's ability to successfully complete learning outcomes of the programme, the student's place may be withdrawn.

### 3.8 Applicants for Veterinary Nursing programmes

SRUC is required to comply with guidance provided by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) regarding the admission of students to its Veterinary Nursing programmes and their fitness to practise and study on an accredited programme. Further information can be found on the RCVS website ([www.rcvs.org.uk](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)).

Veterinary Nursing applicants shall be made aware that fitness to practise procedures apply to the programme of study for which they have applied, and the implications of this. A copy of the Programme Code of Professional Conduct and Fitness to Practise shall be provided with the final confirmation of admission and students will be required to sign a declaration on enrolment.

### 3.9 International Applicants

Statutory regulations as set and monitored by UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI), which govern the ability to participate in learning within the UK, will be incorporated into SRUC's decision making processes. These include:

- the ability to demonstrate an appropriate level of written and spoken English which enables full participation in the learning and assessment activities required by SRUC;
- the demonstration of academic progression;
- the applicant's right to enter and or remain in the UK for the duration of the chosen programme; and
- the ability to demonstrate fulfilment of UKVI's financial requirements.

Where an applicant declares to be a citizen of a country requiring a visa to study, SRUC will request copies of the applicant's passport and permission to stay in the UK. Copies of the documents will be kept on the student file within the admissions department through the application cycle. Once the applicant becomes unconditional firm, copies of these documents will be passed to the International Compliance Lead. The original passport and visa will be checked at enrolment.

If the applicant requires a visa to study at SRUC, the applicant will be advised on the suitability to apply for a Student visa in accordance with the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Procedure (Appendix 1), or other visa types (i.e.: Standard Visitor Visa).

The minimum level required in accepted English language tests, is determined by the Academic Board and detailed on the SRUC website. SRUC may require individual applicants to demonstrate a higher level of achievement than the minimum SRUC level stated. SRUC requirements are set to ensure that any UKVI requirements for visa purposes are met and exceeded where academic needs require. Please be aware that if you require a Student visa to study in the UK and you are applying to a programme below degree level, the test needs to be a Secure English Language Test (SELT) from an approved provider. Please find [list of Home Office approved English Language Tests](#).

The Admissions Team assess international qualifications and make decisions on appropriate international equivalencies. These equivalencies are based on information provided by the [ECCTIS](#) (previously UK NARIC), the National Agency responsible for providing information on academic, vocational and professional qualifications.

In advance of making an unconditional offer for a place and providing an applicant's Certificate of Acceptance for Studies (CAS), the applicant is required to meet SRUC's tuition fee deposit requirement.

### **3.10 Mature Applicants**

SRUC is committed to, and encourages applications from, mature students (UCAS official definition: anyone over the age of 21 who did not go to University after school or College). SRUC has no upper age limit. The entry requirements for mature students are not as fixed as for school and college leavers, therefore non-standard qualifications and relevant experience may be considered. Applicants are advised to contact the Admissions Team to discuss their application.

### **3.11 Widening Participation**

SRUC is an institution committed to enabling participation in its programmes from those sectors currently underrepresented in Higher Education. It is a member of regional Scottish school leaver and adult participation in higher education programmes and recognises the value that these and other comparable programmes from elsewhere in the UK have in assisting an individual's decision to enter, and preparedness for, Higher Education. As such, participants on programmes of which SRUC is a partner may be made offers which vary from SRUC's minimum entry requirements. Further details are available in SRUC's Contextual Admissions Policy.

### **3.12 Care Experienced/Looked after Young People/Estranged Students Carers/**

Research has shown that young people who have spent time in Local Authority care or who are estranged are likely to encounter barriers to successful participation in Further or Higher Education. SRUC recognises this and is committed to ensuring known care leavers applying for and accepted on a programme are offered additional support and advice. Further details are available in SRUC's Contextual Admissions Policy.

### 3.13 Carers

A Carer is a person who has a significant role in looking after someone else who is experiencing illness or disability. SRUC recognises this and is committed to ensuring known carers applying for and accepted on a programme are offered additional support and advice. Further details are available in SRUC's Contextual Admissions Policy

### 3.14 Advanced Entry

An applicant seeking advanced entry is considered on an individual basis taking into account previous study and experience e.g. HNC, HND. Entry to Year 2 of some programmes may be permitted with high grades in Advanced Highers or A Levels. Applicants who wish to be considered for advanced entry should state this clearly on their application and ensure sufficient information is included in the application to enable a decision on advanced entry to be taken.

### 3.15 Dual Registration

Students of SRUC are only permitted to be registered for one academic award at a time. Therefore, any application which would lead to concurrent study at the same or a different level will be rejected.

Students are permitted to be registered on concurrent programmes where it is a requirement of a formal exchange agreement.

### 3.16 Request to Defer a Place

An HE applicant can only defer a place by one year, regardless of whether this was requested before or after an offer was accepted. The opportunity to defer an offer is not available for all programmes. The opportunity to defer is not available for FE programmes.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Admissions Team ([admissions@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@sruc.ac.uk)) to discuss their individual situation.

### 3.17 Review of Admissions Decisions and Complaints against Process

#### Feedback on Unsuccessful Applications

SRUC is committed to fairness and transparency in its admissions process and will respond to requests for feedback on unsuccessful applications. All feedback will be given in writing and in accordance with Data Protection legislation and will be directly with the applicant. No information will be released to a third party without the prior written consent of the applicant.

All requests should be made in writing, providing full name, admissions ID or UCAS Personal ID and the programme of study applied for and sent to the Admissions Team ([admissions@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@sruc.ac.uk)) within 10 working days of the admissions decision being notified to the applicant. The Admissions Team will then respond to the applicant within 10 working days.



## Appeals

Appeals against an admissions decision will only be considered where there is additional information, which for good reason was not made available during the application or selection process and is directly relevant to the admissions decision.

All requests should be made in writing, providing full name, admissions ID or UCAS Personal ID and the programme of study applied for and sent to the Admissions Team ([admissions@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@sruc.ac.uk)) within 10 working days after receipt of feedback if this has previously been requested.

The Admissions Lead will then make the necessary investigations, and where relevant will include a review of the admissions decision and include discussion with the relevant Programme Team. The Admissions Lead will respond to the applicant, in writing with the outcome of the appeal normally within 10 working days.

## Complaints

Applicants or their representatives who are dissatisfied with the service provided by Admissions should refer to SRUC's Complaints Procedure. This procedure cannot be used to change an admissions decision.

Further information:

[https://www.sruc.ac.uk/forms/form/203/service\\_complaint\\_form](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/forms/form/203/service_complaint_form)

### 3.18 Fraudulent Applications

All applicants have a responsibility to ensure the information submitted on their application is accurate and up to date. The decision to offer a place is based on the information contained in the application and where it is discovered that an applicant has submitted incorrect or inaccurate information as part of their application, SRUC will investigate further and reserves the right to withdraw the offer of admission or withdraw a student who has already enrolled.

### 3.19 Cancellation and Changes to Programmes

Programmes, services and procedures are continually reviewed, enhanced and revised and this may result in changes to or cancellation of programmes. Where any changes or cancellations occur, SRUC will notify the applicant and provide an alternative offer where possible.

## 4. Staff Development

SRUC has an enabling Staff Development Policy and staff involved in the Admissions process will access appropriate internal and external training and professional development.

## 5. Equality and Diversity

In considering applications for admission, SRUC does not discriminate on any basis including those of age, religion and belief, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and gender reassignment.

SRUC will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate applicants who demonstrate the academic potential to commence on and succeed on their chosen programme. Applicants with additional learning or other needs are requested to make these known at application to enable SRUC, the applicant and any advisory third parties to assess adjustments required. Applicants are advised that SRUC's courses blend academic, vocational and practical learning and for some programmes adjustment may not be possible as to do so will alter the course's learning outcomes. While SRUC is committed to make 'reasonable adjustments' for students, it must ensure that these adjustments do not exceed what would be considered reasonable within the relevant workplace.

Where an applicant declares disability and meets or is predicted to meet the minimum entry requirement a team of staff will consider the application further. The team will be appropriate for the specific applicant and could comprise representatives from Admissions, the programme management team and specialist support and services staff. The local Academic Liaison Manager may be included in the discussions.

Staff involved in the Admissions process undertake Equality and Diversity and unconscious bias training.

## 6. Monitoring and Review Mechanisms

At the end of each admissions cycle, the Academic Leadership Team will receive a statistical report with outcome analysis of the number of students under the auspices of this Policy.

This Policy will be reviewed for its fitness for purpose annually or when internal or external factors require change.

If change is necessary due to change in sector legislation or critical business need, exceptional approval is permitted by Learning and Teaching Committee out with this timescale and with Chair's action if required.

Lead Officer:	Admissions Lead
Responsible Department:	Admissions, Academic Registry
Date policy approved:	
Date policy due for review:	

## APPENDIX 1

### Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) – Procedure

#### 1. Introduction

Since 2010, all students applying for a student visa from both within the UK and overseas require a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). Each CAS is unique and is issued to a student by SRUC as their sponsor. The CAS is not an actual certificate but a virtual document with a unique reference number. On each CAS, SRUC makes a statement to the UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) listing the evidence that has been used to determine the student's suitability for the programme.

Before issuing a CAS, SRUC has an obligation to ensure that the student will meet the requirements for a Student visa. This obligation is stated in [Document 2 of the Guidance for Sponsors](#).

#### 2. Scope and Purpose

This document sets out SRUC's procedure for issuing a CAS to prospective students. SRUC will ensure its adherence to its obligations as a licensed sponsor under the Points Based Immigration system and will always exercise caution when issuing a CAS in order not to risk its Student sponsor license. SRUC is under no legal obligation to issue a CAS to all its applicants.

The [Immigration Rules](#), [Student and Child Student guidance](#) and the [Student Sponsor guidance](#) will at all times supersede and override the content of this policy.

#### 3. Key Responsibilities

All staff working with international students requiring a Student visa must ensure that this procedure is adhered to. The International Compliance Lead is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the CAS allocation process and for CAS issuing. The International Officer will help with CAS issuing at peak times and cover for the International Compliance Lead when needed. In the absence of the International Compliance Lead and the International Officer, other Level 1 users<sup>1</sup> on the UK Visa Sponsor Management System (SMS) could assign a CAS if it is an emergency.

The applicant seeking a CAS is responsible for providing SRUC with all requested documentation in a timely manner.

Issuing a CAS does not guarantee that a visa application will be successful, and it is the student's responsibility to check that all Student Visa requirements are met. SRUC is not responsible for any decision made by the Home Office.

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<sup>1</sup> SMS Level 1 users include the Marketing & Student Recruitment Manager and the Admissions Lead.

## 4. Issuing a CAS

The CAS will be issued by the International Compliance Lead or the International Officer, in their absence, by SMS Level 1 users.

A CAS will not be assigned to an applicant more than 6 months before the official start date for their programme of studies (3 months prior to the start date of the course if they are applying for their visa from within the UK). For existing students requiring a visa extension, the CAS will be issued in a reasonable timeframe which aligns with the student's programme of study.

SRUC will only sponsor an applicant or existing student where it believes that the visa application will be successful. In order to determine this, the International Compliance Lead and the International Officer will request from the applicant:

- Copies of academic qualifications on which the offer of a place on the programme was based
- English language qualification in accordance with SRUC/UKVI policies
- Declaration of intention of studies/application cover letter
- Declaration of previous UK study (if appropriate)
- Previous UK visas and visa refusals (if appropriate)
- Copy of funds available
- Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate (if required)

All of the above documents must meet the format requirements stated in the [Immigration Rules](#) and the [Student and Child Student guidance](#)

SRUC will not provide visa sponsorship under the following circumstances:

- The programme of study does not comply with Student visa requirements
- The applicant has submitted documents that are suspected to be fraudulent
- There is any reason to believe that the student will not comply with the conditions of their Student visa
- The applicant has not paid the deposit when this is a requirement
- Any further visa application will lead the student to exceed the maximum limit under the Student Visa route
- There is reason to believe that sponsoring the student will put SRUC's Student Sponsor status at risk

This is not an exhaustive list and SRUC reserves the right to deny a CAS in other circumstances.

## 5. Assessment of Academic Progression

If an applicant has previously had permission to stay through a Student Visa (pre-2010), Tier 4 Student or Student Visa routes then SRUC can only assign a CAS if the new programme of study represents academic progress from previous studies.

As a general rule, academic progression is:

- Where the new programme is levelled above the old programme; or is at the same level but complements the previous programme or career aspirations; and
- The student completed the previous programme for which Tier 4/Student visa was granted.

Students should apply to SRUC through the usual application process.

However there are exceptions to these general rules. Therefore for more information, including the exceptions, please refer to the [sponsor guidance](#).

Any student applying within the exceptions for academic progression for a programme below or at the same academic level as their previous studies, will also be required to complete an academic progression form which is available from the International Compliance Lead and the International Officer. The International Compliance Lead/ the International Officer and the relevant Programme Leader will consider the application together with the academic progression form and determine whether the progression can be justified. If it is not, then SRUC will not issue a CAS.

## 6. Sending a CAS to an Applicant or Existing Student

Once all conditions for a CAS have been met, the International Compliance Lead or the International Officer will send a draft CAS to the applicant/student or their international representative (where appropriate) for their approval prior to submitting the final version in the Sponsor Management System. The final CAS will also be sent directly to the applicant/student or their international representative (where appropriate).

The CAS, draft or final, will not be sent to any other third party unless the applicant or existing student has provided written consent.

## 7. Visa Refusals

In order to request a new CAS, the applicant whose visa has been refused must send SRUC all pages of their Home Office refusal notice.

Any applicant wishing to submit an administrative review after their visa refusal must seek advice from SRUC before proceeding.

SRUC will only consider sending another CAS following a visa refusal if the applicant can provide evidence that there is minimal or no chance of their visa being refused again. A further CAS will not normally be assigned if the applicant was refused due to failing a credibility interview.

## 8. Terms and Conditions of Student Sponsorship

All students sponsored by SRUC are expected to comply with their Student Visa responsibilities as set by the UKVI, as well as with policies and procedures that apply to all SRUC students. SRUC reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship at its discretion.

For further guidance and assistance, please contact:

**Alejandra Castellano**

International Compliance Lead

Postgraduate Office

Tel.: 0131 535 4126

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## Document History

<b>Rev.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>
01	Nov 2020	Reviewed and updated in line with structural changes.
02	Sept 2021	Update for 2022 entry and visa terminology