EDUCATION MANUAL

D: Learner Support

Chapter: **D: LEARNER SUPPORT**

Section: **D4: Admissions**

Classifications: **Policy and Procedures**

Title: **D4.1 Admissions**

Author: **Student Experience Committee**

Date: **May 2018 (Revised October 2018)**

POLICY

1.   Overall Aim

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 programme, 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, incorporates SRUC's policies for Widening Participation, Equality, Inclusion and Taught Tuition Fees. The Higher Education sector good practice identified by the Equality Challenge Unit (now part of Advance HE) have 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. 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 outwith the UK.

This Policy excludes short course provision where applicants register for individual modules, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), training provision and work based learning courses, although aspects of this policy will be relevant and referred to in other policies and procedures as appropriate.

3.   Related Policies

Education Division Policies including:
- Inclusion
- Learning Support
- Widening Participation
- Taught Tuition Fees

SRUC Policies including:
- Equality and Diversity

These lists will increase as the number of SRUC policies grow.

4.   Associated Procedures and Guidance Notes

Education Division Procedures and Guidance Notes including:
- Admissions (UCAS and Direct)
- International

- Additional Learning Support
- Criminal Convictions
- Complaints Handling

PROCEDURE

1.   Management of Admissions

The SRUC Admissions service is managed by Education Business Support within the Education Division. For admissions purposes, the Education Business Support Manager is the designated Head of Admissions and is accountable to the Head of Education for decisions taken. The routine decision making and administration of the admissions process is undertaken by the Admissions Team led by the Admissions Manager.

The UCAS service is used for all applications to SRUC's full-time 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 and 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.

1.1 Entry Requirements

Admissions criteria are publically 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. 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, including 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.

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

1.2 Decision Making

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

SRUC operates a centralised admissions process for its UCAS undergraduate applications. The Admissions Team will normally make decisions on applications in which SRUC's stated minimum entry requirements (or equivalent) have been or are predicated to be met. The designated Admissions Tutor for the programme, who will normally be a member of the programme management team, will be involved as appropriate.

SRUC operates a campus based admissions process for its direct applications. Decisions are taken by the designated member of the programme management team i.e. the programme's Admissions Tutor.

For taught postgraduate applications, the designated Admissions Tutor for the programme will consider the application.

Applications presenting alternative qualifications and/or experiential learning will be considered by the programme's Admissions Tutor 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.

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

1.3 Interviews

Interviews may be used as a means to inform academic selection.

Applicants for FE programmes will normally be expected to attend for interview.

A number of HE programmes interview applicants as part of the selection process. Please contact the Admissions Office for further details.

SRUC may interview applicants applying for advanced entry to programmes covered by progression agreements with other Colleges.

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.

1.4 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 programme, evidence of commitment to the cognate area and ability to integrate into SRUC's learning community. As such, an applicant's personal statement and reference are key sources of information.

For some programme 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 1.6 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 allocated to Scottish domicile and EU 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 and those from overseas (excluding EU territories which are included

within the EU numbers). These students are not funded by the SFC and appropriate fees are in place. 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 15th January, the UCAS deadline for full time undergraduate places. The remainder will be made after this date to ensure equal consideration.

1.5 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.

SRUC continues to accept and process applications following the 15th January UCAS 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 5.7).

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 programme, which provides essential advice and guidance to prepare students for the start of their studies.

1.6 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 Manager.

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. 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 conditional offer of a place may be withdrawn.

1.7 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 in the RCVS guidance document: Disability Guidance on the Recruitment of VN Students[1].

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

---

[1] https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/disability-guidance-on-the-recruitment-of-vn-students/

provided with the final confirmation of admission and students sign a declaration on enrolment.

1.8 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.

The minimum level required in accepted English language tests, is determined by the Learning and Teaching Committee 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 Tier 4 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 **here** the 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 UK National Recognition Information Centre (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 both SRUC's and the UKVI's financial requirements. Details of these are available from SRUC and the UKVI websites. The procedure for issuing a CAS is attached as Appendix.

1.9 Mature Applicants

SRUC is committed to, and encourages, applications from mature students (UCAS official definition: anyone over the age of 21 who didn't go to University after school or to College). The entry requirements for mature students are not as fixed as for school and college leavers, therefore non-standard qualifications may be considered. Applicants are advised to contact the Admissions Team to discuss their application.

1.10 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 the individual's decision to enter and be prepared 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 Widening Participation Policy.

1.11 Care Experienced and Looked after Young People/Carers

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

1.12 Advanced Entry

An applicant seeking advanced entry is considered on an individual basis taking into account previous study and experience e.g. HNC, HND. 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.

1.13 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.

1.14 Request to Defer a Place

An applicant can only defer a place by one year, regardless of whether this was requested before or after an offer being 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 Office to discuss their individual situation.

1.15 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 admissions@sruc.ac.uk within 10 working days of the admissions decision being notified to the applicant. The Admissions Manager 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 admissions@sruc.ac.uk within 10 working days after receipt of feedback if this has previously been requested.

The Admissions Manager 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 Manager 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

1.16 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 withdrawn the offer of admission or withdraw a student who has already enrolled.

1.17 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 inform the applicant.

2.   Staff Development

SRUC has an enabling Staff Development Policy and staff involved in Admissions will access appropriate internal and external training and professional development. A core feature of this staff development is the annual Admissions Roadshow to which all Admissions Tutors, Marketing and Student Recruitment Officers, members of the Education Division Management Team, and other interested members of staff are invited. The Roadshow reviews the admissions cycle just completed, provides an update on any operating changes brought about by internal or external requirements, and considers any changes to this procedure which might be required.

3.   Equality and Diversity

In considering applications for admission SRUC does not discriminate on any basis including those of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and disability.

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 programmes blend academic, vocational and practical learning and for some programmes adjustment may not be possible as to do so will alter the programme'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 or specific learning needs, 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 and the programme management team plus specialist support and services staff. The local Senior Tutor may be included in the discussions.

4.   Monitoring and review mechanisms

At the end of each academic year, the Education Division Management Team will receive a statistical report with outcome analysis of the number of students under the auspices of this procedure.

APPENDIX

Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) - Procedure

1. Introduction

Since 2010, all students applying for a Tier 4 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 Tier 4 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 Tier 4 sponsor license. SRUC is under no legal obligation to issue a CAS to all its applicants.

The Immigration Rules, Tier 4 Policy guidance and the Tier 4 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 Tier 4 visa must ensure that this procedure is adhered to. The Immigration Officer is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the CAS allocation process and for CAS issuing. In the absence of the Immigration Officer, Level 1 users[2] 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 Tier 4 requirements are met. SRUC is not responsible for any decision made by the Home Office.

4. Issuing a CAS

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

---

[2] SMS Level 1 users include the Marketing & Student Recruitment Manager and the Admissions Manager.

A CAS will not be assigned to an applicant more than 3 months before the official start date for their programme of studies. 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 Immigration 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 Tier 4 Policy guidance

SRUC will not provide Tier 4 sponsorship under the following circumstances:

- The programme of study does not comply with Tier 4 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 Tier 4 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 Tier 4
- There is reason to believe that sponsoring the student will put SRUC's Tier 4 licence 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) or as a Tier 4 Student 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 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 Immigration Officer. The Immigration 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 Immigration Officer or SMS Level 1 user 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 Tier 4 sponsorship

All students sponsored by SRUC are expected to comply with their Tier 4 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 Guerrero

Immigration Officer
Postgraduate Office
Tel.: 0131 535 4126
e-mail: Alejandra.Castellano@sruc.ac.uk