



Harper Adams
University

Admissions Policy

(Approved by Academic Board on 30th June 2015)

JUNE 2015

HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Harper Adams University is a specialist higher education institution whose mission is 'higher education and research for the delivery of a sustainable food chain and rural economy'.
- 1.2 The University aims to offer the highest quality courses, as measured by external assessment and an outstanding student experience, with high levels of student retention, progression, completion and employment. The Admissions Policy supports these goals by providing equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations.
- 1.3 The University is committed to achieving an educational environment which provides equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, disability, religion or political beliefs, age, sexual orientation or social or economic background.
- 1.4 This Admissions Policy addresses the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Policy is informed by the University's codes of practice and policies on equal opportunities, data protection and widening participation, and takes into account the access agreements submitted to the Office for Fair Access. The Policy has also used the Equality Challenge Unit's Equitable Admissions for Underrepresented groups report (December 2012) as a guide.
- 1.5 The Policy is guided by the principles outlined by the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group and the Schwartz review recommendations of 2004 that a fair admissions system should:
- be transparent
 - strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid
 - enable institutions to select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and potential
 - seek to minimise barriers for applicants
 - be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and policies.
- 1.6 The Policy complies with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, in particular section B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, B2: Admissions (October 2013) and has taken into account renewed guidance from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA). It also acts within the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) guidelines in relation to undergraduate admissions.
- 1.7 This Policy applies to the admission of students to the University's undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research programmes. Its principles, although not necessarily the detailed operations, also apply to the admission of students to co-funded employer engagement programmes through which the awards of Harper Adams are made and programmes delivered in partnership with Harper Adams

University. All staff with responsibility for the admission of students are required to comply with the Policy. This policy does not apply to validated programmes based at other universities or colleges, which have their own policies for managing admissions decisions.

- 1.8 The policy is available to all applicants and staff through the University website at <http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/about/>. All applicants who are successful in receiving an offer of a place at the University will receive the policy along with other supplementary information which is sent at that time.
- 1.9 This policy is applicable up to the point at which a student commences their course of study. After this point, students are required to refer to the Student Handbook relevant to the current academic year, their Course Handbook and other Key Terms as set out on the University website at <http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/about/governance/publication-scheme.cfm> (under section 8) for the policies and arrangements which apply during the course of their studies. All applicants will be provided with the latest Student Handbook, which details the key policies as well as a web link to other Key Terms, at the point of offer so they can become familiar with the arrangements within which programmes operate, before their arrival.

2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMISSIONS

- 2.1 The Academic Board receives an annual report on the admission of students to the University, provided by the Director of Academic Services, at the end of each admissions cycle. Regular interim reports throughout the cycle are also provided and used to confirm the financial viability and academic vibrancy of courses. The number of places available on each course are determined by the Director of Academic Services, in conjunction with the Course Managers. This is done by taking into account the actual and projected level of applications and the need to protect the student experience.
- 2.2 The University sets out its general entry requirements in the prospectus, its website and, for undergraduate students, on the UCAS website. Course Teams determine specific entry requirements and these are approved at course validation. Any course specific entry requirements are also identified in the University's prospectus and website and the UCAS website. Entry requirements are reviewed annually, with each course team setting their own requirements. Entry requirements are set by considering the entry qualifications and achievement levels of current students in calibrating future requirements. Some courses also have entry requirements which include a minimum level of relevant work experience. This is to ensure that all students admitted have a good chance of succeeding on the course, as the University has a duty of care to ensure that it only admits students who are sufficiently prepared for study at Higher Education level. The University website and UCAS's 'Course Collect' pages are routinely updated to display the current entry requirements. As the prospectus is created several years in advance of student enrolment on to a programme, it carries a disclaimer regarding entry requirements and directs applicants to the website for the most up to date information.
- 2.3 The Director of Academic Services has strategic responsibility for admissions to the University. Operational responsibility is delegated to the Head of Registry, who manages the Registry team responsible for admissions and liaises closely with admissions tutors within each course teams who judge the potential of each applicant to succeed on programmes.

- 2.4 The Registry¹ is responsible for receiving and initially reviewing applications from potential students, arranging interviews, informing applicants about the outcome of their application and/or interview, confirming offers of places in consultation with Course Teams following the publication of results, issuing joining instructions and managing the enrolment of new students.
- 2.5 As a routine part of the admissions process, applicants may be required to provide further information regarding their work experience, or proof of their qualifications, before their applications can be fully considered. The University also has access to the Learning Records Service to check and verify qualifications where necessary.
- 2.6 While reviewing applications, the Registry will also assess applications for inaccuracies and inconsistencies and ask applicants to comment on these as necessary. However, should evidence come to light that a fraudulent application has led to an applicant enrolling as a student, despite the best endeavours of the Registry team, the student will be automatically suspended pending an investigation, which could result in the student being permanently excluded. By signing an application form or by submitting one through UCAS, applicants are declaring that the information they are providing is complete, true and accurate. This declaration is also included within the enrolment agreement which all students are required to sign when they commence their studies and at the beginning of each academic year of their course.
- 2.7 While the Registry will invite applicants to interview, it is the course teams who are responsible for interviewing applicants, typically in person, although telephone and online interviews can be organised where circumstances demand such. Course Managers or other designated admissions tutors determine whether to offer a place on a course to an applicant.
- 2.8 Applicants to courses run in conjunction with Askham Bryan College and Reaseheath College apply directly to the College which has responsibility for determining an applicant's suitability for a course, in line with the broad entry requirements specified at course validation. They are not included in the scope of this policy and applicants should refer to the Admissions Policy of the College to which they are applying.
- 2.9 Responsibility for the promotional activities of Harper Adams University sits within the Marketing and Internationalisation Strategies and is outside the remit of this policy, beyond the expectation that information and advice provided to applicants and pre-applicants is comprehensive and accurate.

3. ADMISSIONS PROCESS

- 3.1 The University recognises its responsibility to identify the talent and the potential of applicants and to treat all applicants fairly. Talent and potential is not always fully demonstrated by assessment results alone and consideration will also be given to each applicant's experiences, skills and potential and how these contribute to the learning environment of the course and the wider student community. Applicants must generally however satisfy the academic entry requirement range of the course for their application to be considered through the admissions stages below. Pre-applicants who are unsure whether their application would be progressed since they do not clearly satisfy the entry requirement qualification range are invited to contact the Registry team, who can provide advice.

¹The term 'Registry', for the purpose of this policy, is used to describe all the offices which process applications on behalf of the University, including the Registry Office which deals with undergraduate admissions, the Postgraduate Office which deals with postgraduate admissions and the Office of the Assistant to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who deals with research admissions.

- 3.2 Details of how to apply for Harper Adams courses are available through the website and prospectus and are reviewed annually to ensure accuracy. Applicants for undergraduate courses are required to apply through UCAS and must abide by the rules and regulations set out by them as well as the University. Applicants for all other courses apply to the University directly.
- 3.3 All potentially suitable applicants who live in the UK and Republic of Ireland are normally invited for interview in person, on campus. All applicants for Veterinary Nursing courses are required to attend the University for interview, as set out in section 5. Guidance for applicants on what to expect on an interview afternoon is held on the University website. Applicants from the wider EU and International students will be required to be available for an interview via web-based communication channels, such as Skype, if they are unable to be interviewed in person.
- 3.4 In determining an applicant's suitability for a course, the Admissions Officer² and Course Manager, or other designated admissions tutor, will take into account a range of information, as follows:
- (i) the applicant's potential to succeed in the selected programme of study;
 - (ii) actual or expected academic or professional qualifications and grades;
 - (iii) relevant work or other experience;
 - (iv) the applicant's own statements of interest in the programme;
 - (v) references (usually academic, but also professional where relevant to the proposed programme);
 - (vi) an interview and/or a sample of the applicant's work, which is used to explore the applicant's understanding of, and interest in, the relevant course of study and associated employment sectors.
- 3.5 If an applicant is invited for interview, they will normally be notified of the outcome of their application within one month of the interview, although outside of peak times, this timescale will be shorter. If for any reason, this period of time may be longer, for example due to a high volume of applications for a specific course, the affected applicants will be notified as soon as possible. The final decision on all applications will be made by the Course Manager, or other designated admissions tutors, and details of the decision will be clearly shown on the applicant file.
- 3.6 Some courses operate a 'waiting list' in respect of interview slots. This is due to the high demand for such courses and a need to ensure that all applicants are considered equally. Any applicants in this situation are kept informed of the status of their application at regular intervals.
- 3.7 As all applications are reviewed on an individual basis, applicants for the same course may not always have the same offer; variations often take into account the subjects that the applicant is studying at level 3, the amount of prior work experience that they have or any exceptional circumstances that the applicant may be faced with. While the majority of offers made are within the range of the published entry requirements, the University retains the right to use its discretion to offer places exceptionally to applicants who sit outside of the normal entry qualification range. At all times, the University's priority will be to judge the potential of each candidate to succeed in their studies, irrespective of background.

²The term 'Admissions Officer', for the purpose of this policy, is used to describe all those who process applications on behalf of the University, including the Admissions Officer who deals with undergraduate admissions, the Postgraduate Officer who deals with postgraduate admissions and the Assistant to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who deals with research admissions.

- 3.8 Applications for deferred entry are accepted and considered at the same time as all other applicants. Deferred applicants must have their offer conditions satisfied within the same application year and cannot be carried over into the following one. In exceptional circumstances, work experience requirements may be extended, at the discretion of the Course Manager, but all academic conditions must be met. If an applicant wishes to defer, or has applied for deferred entry and subsequently wishes to join in the application year, they need to contact the Admissions Officer as soon as possible as all requests will be considered on the basis of spaces available. Students are subject to the fee liabilities of their year of entry cohort, rather than the admissions cycle in which they gained a place.
- 3.9 Where an applicant is unsuccessful with their application, they will receive confirmation of the rejection in writing. Undergraduate applicants will also receive confirmation through UCAS. The reason for the reject decision will be clearly explained in the letter, and where appropriate advice on how to improve the likelihood that any future application would be accepted will be provided. If an unsuccessful applicant would like further advice or to discuss a reject decision, they should contact the relevant Admissions Officer in the first instance.
- 3.10 Applicants will be sent information during the course of the admissions cycle, including dedicated finance information, information on the process of applying for accommodation and newsletters from course teams. They will also receive copies of the latest version of the Student Handbook, Fees and Charges Handbook and Admissions Policy when they are made an offer, as well as a web link to other Key Terms. They will also be provided with a cancellation notice as required under English legal regulations. All firm applicants will be sent 'Information for New Students' in July each year. Applicants who are deferred from a previous cycle will also receive information relating to updates on the University or their course of study, so they are kept informed of changes.
- 3.11 Where an applicant is made an offer(s), they will receive details of how this, should they accept it, forms a contract between themselves and the University. Applicants are advised to read this information in full and ensure that they understand it before they make any decisions. The contract information also includes details on how to cancel the contract after a 'cooling off' period. For undergraduate students, there is also a period of time where changes to decisions are permitted under the rules of the UCAS scheme.
- 3.12 Applicants will be advised by the Registry of any significant changes to a course, such as a change in a professional body's recognition of a programme, a change in the award title or major changes to the curriculum (considered to be a replacement of at least three compulsory modules over the duration of the programme) or significant revisions to placement requirements. Any such changes are made in consultation with existing student representatives and are informed by advancements in understanding in a discipline, student and employer feedback or professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements.
- 3.13 If, due to exceptional circumstances, a course is suspended or withdrawn for new entrants, the Registry will make every effort to provide assistance to help applicants find an alternative course, based either at Harper Adams University or elsewhere and, for undergraduate students, will advise on the UCAS procedure to follow. In making a decision to suspend or withdraw a course for new enrolments, the University takes into account the financial viability of programmes and the vibrancy of the likely learning experience. The University will advise applicants at the earliest opportunity of the possibility that new enrolments on to a specific course are at risk of suspension or withdrawal.

- 3.14 When final entry requirement results are released, during the 'confirmation' period, the University reserves the right to refuse admission to applicants who have not met the minimum entry requirements or who cannot meet the academic or vocational requirements stated in the original course offer letter. Attempts will be made to offer an alternative course to applicants where appropriate, taking into account their qualifications and the entry requirements and subject to places being available.
- 3.15 The Admissions Officer and University welcomes and will reconsider applications from applicants who were unsuccessful in previous years, provided that they have taken positive action to improve their application to avoid being unsuccessful again. Applicants who reapply must do so through the normal channel (UCAS for undergraduates and directly to the University for other courses) and cannot rely on their previous application, although the University may refer back to any previous applications (held electronically or on paper) for information and evidence of progression.
- 3.16 The paper records of applications from applicants who are no longer active, due to rejection, declining offers or withdrawing are held for the duration of the next admissions cycle, up to a maximum of 12 months, and are then destroyed.
- 3.17 Applications are welcomed from international applicants. Their qualifications will be checked against the UK Naric database to determine their equivalency and suitability for entry against the published entry requirements. Applicants will be required to have a level of English Language to meet the University's minimum requirements and those of the Home Office for students requiring a Tier 4 visa. The University website is regularly updated as English Language requirements change. Overseas applicants from outside the EU, who require University sponsorship for visa purposes, are also required to pay a deposit to the University before they can be issued with an unconditional offer for visa purposes. They may also be subject to other offer conditions which are determined by the UK Visas and Immigration agency policies, where such is required for the University to fulfil its Tier 4 visa sponsorship obligations, as opposed to solely for admission onto the course. For International students requiring a Tier 4 visa, the University will also be required to make thorough checks on immigration history and qualification history to ensure that the University is able to make an offer to an applicant within the Home Office visa sponsorship rules. These rules are subject to change at any time and these changes are beyond the control of the University. For all applicants requiring a Tier 4 visa, the University will be required to share personal information with the UK Visas and Immigration department of the Home Office in order to facilitate the visa application process. Information about visa sponsored students, post-enrolment, might also be shared with immigration agencies, in fulfilment of the University's visa sponsorship obligations.
- 3.18 All applications will be processed within set internal deadline dates. For undergraduate applications, these will also be subject to the deadlines set by UCAS. Late applications will only be considered where there is sufficient time to accurately process the application and if there are places still available. Overseas students requiring visa sponsorship are subject to different deadline dates to the home/EU students to ensure that visa applications can be processed. Most overseas and non-UK EU students are also normally required to attend an extended induction programme, which starts earlier than the general academic induction programme for all students.
- 3.19 Students at all levels will be subject to attendance monitoring throughout the course of their studies. Students requiring visa sponsorship will be subject to additional monitoring in line with Home Office requirements.
- 3.20 Prior to arrival at the University, all undergraduate and postgraduate students are required to enrol online for their course and all applicants are required to provide

evidence of their personal identification upon arrival in order for their enrolment to be confirmed. Failure to provide an acceptable form of personal identification within the specified timeframe will result in a students' provisional enrolment not being confirmed and lead to withdrawal.

- 3.21 All successful applicants are required to attend the University in person to register for their course on their allocated start date. With prior agreement only, where a student is not able to attend at the commencement of the induction period, they must commence studies within two weeks of the normal start date. Students are not permitted to register any later than this as they will have missed too much of the course to be successful. Due to the nature of Taught Postgraduate programme and its delivery pattern, it may not be possible for a postgraduate student to commence their course after the confirmed start date.

4. MINIMISING BARRIERS TO ADMISSION

- 4.1 The University accepts the full range of level 3 qualifications as the basis for undergraduate admission, including A levels, AS levels, BTEC Extended and National Diplomas, Scottish Highers, Irish Leaving Certificates, Access to HE Qualifications, the European and International Baccalaureates and equivalent international qualifications. The published entry requirements cover the most common qualifications and applicants are advised to contact the Admissions Officer should their qualification not be included. Undergraduate students are also required to have achieved a minimum number of GCSE (including Scottish and Irish equivalent qualifications) subjects at grades A*-C, which are not superseded by level 3 qualifications.
- 4.2 Taught postgraduate students are required to have the equivalent of a Second Class Honours Degree or a Higher National Diploma/FdSc with significant work experience. Due to the professional nature of postgraduate study, applicants without degrees may also be considered if they have sufficient relevant, higher level, work experience and supporting professional qualifications.
- 4.3 The University offers an Extended Foundation Degree Programme which provides a progression route to higher education courses for students who do not possess the minimum level 3 entry requirements. The programme does, however, have its own specific set of entry requirements which must be met for admission to be granted.
- 4.4 The University will also consider applications from more 'mature' applicants, of at least 21 years of age, who may not meet the minimum academic entry requirements. These applicants must however have significant experience working in a relevant sector which would provide confidence that the applicant is likely to be successful in their studies.
- 4.5 The minimum age on entry is normally 17 years old. Applicants who will turn 18 by the 1st May in their first year will have their application processed as other applicants. The University will exceptionally consider applications from those who turn 18 after 1st May in the first year of the course, and who meet the minimum academic and experience requirements, although the University will make an individualised assessment as to whether it is able to provide an adequate duty of care to these students until they turn 18 years of age. By accepting applicants who are under 18, the University has to ensure it has sufficient resources for the additional provisions and duty of care required. Students who are under 18 are subject to, and are required to comply with, the restrictions that are imposed upon them, such as curfews, signing in and out and restrictions on access to the student bars and some social activities. The University requires all those who are under 18 at the time of enrolment to sign an 'Under 18 behaviour' agreement consenting to comply with additional restrictions that are placed

upon them until they turn 18. The agreement is for students living both on and off campus.

- 4.6 Certificated learning that has occurred as a result of study towards an award at another institution may be given general or specific credit towards a Harper Adams award if it matches the agreed learning outcomes. This may allow entry with advanced standing to a later stage of the course or exemption from individual modules. Academic credit may also be derived from the assessment of experiential learning, although this may not exceed half of the total credit required for an award. For the conferment of a Harper Adams award, at least 50% of the level 5, 6 or 7 minimum credit requirements must be graded through Harper Adams assessment procedures. Applicants who wish to be considered for credit will also need to meet the basic course entry requirements, as published, and satisfy the extant requirements for accreditation of prior learning at the time of applying for such.
- 4.7 For some course areas, the University is required to remain within requirements set by professional statutory and regulatory bodies with regards to entry requirements and the applicant characteristics which may affect ability to succeed (as explained in Section 5 for Veterinary Nurses.) These requirements will be integrated into the published entry requirements.

5 APPLICANTS FOR VETERINARY NURSING COURSES

- 5.1 The University is required to comply with guidance produced by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) regarding the admission of students to its Veterinary Nursing courses and their fitness to practise and study on an accredited course.
- 5.2 The RCVS is a 'qualifications body' which sets out its own competence standards. These are defined within the Equality Act 2010 as an academic, medical or other standard applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability. This means that a professional standard is applied equally to all applicants to ensure they are competent and able to perform in the role of a Veterinary Nurse in the interests of safety for patients, the public and the applicant themselves.
- 5.3 In addition to the published academic and vocational entry requirements, the University must consider if the applicant has a disability or long term illness which will prohibit them from being able to practise as a veterinary nurse. The University needs to consider not only the applicant's ability to complete the course, and the professional standards within it, but also the employment prospects as a veterinary nurse of the applicant once the course is completed.
- 5.4 While the University is committed to make 'reasonable adjustments' for students, it must ensure that these adjustments do not exceed what would be also be considered reasonable within a veterinary practice workplace.
- 5.5 The RCVS has identified the following conditions which the University will need to review before offering an applicant a place:
- (i) Dyslexia – is the applicant able to deal with the highly technical language and the reading load of the course? Is their written work of a standard to be understood, particularly when considering the dispensing of prescriptions?
 - (ii) Visual Impairments – applicants should be able to conduct microscope work with absolute accuracy.
 - (iii) Hearing Impairments – applicants must be able to communicate with others and cope in a range of contexts.

- (iv) Mental Illness/Drug Abuse—applicants must be at a stage in their recovery where any mental impairment is sufficiently managed that they are able to cope with the stress related to the role of a veterinary nurse and that the availability of drugs does not present a risk to themselves or others
- (v) Anorexia –applicants must develop a capacity for self-appraisal which someone with anorexia may not be able to do due to an inability to admit such a condition. There may also be concerns regarding an applicant’s physical capacity to perform the role (see point vi)
- (vi) Physical Disabilities –the applicant must be able to perform the professional standards of the role, including the ability to handle and restrain animals of all shapes and sizes.
- (vii) Asthma/Allergies and other related health problems – applicants must be able to handle all animals, dispense medications and use chemicals in all situations

5.6 The University will request information regarding fitness to practise from all potentially suitably qualified veterinary nursing applicants before any invitation to interview is made. This request will be in the form of a ‘Fitness to Practise Questionnaire’ which all applicants are required to complete before their application is considered further. Failure to do so will result in the application being rejected. The questionnaire asks for details of all current and historic medical conditions as well as requesting that the applicant discloses information about any disability and support requirements. The information is handled in the strictest confidence and is only used for the sole purpose of determining an applicants’ fitness to study and practise in the professional field. The responses provided will not have an impact on assessing an applicant for a place on the course unless it is deemed that they have a condition which would prevent them from practising as a veterinary nurse, as determined by the RCVS. The University may be required to seek independent medical advice and that of the RCVS if there is doubt over whether to consider an applicant for admission.

5.7 Should a student have a condition which worsens during the course of their studies which means they will be unable to meet the professional standards required, the University has an alternative award of Veterinary Health Studies which may be appropriate for a student to transfer to. This award does not qualify an individual to work as a practising veterinary nurse.

6. APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

6.1 The University is committed to providing equal opportunities for all of its students and actively encourages potential students who may be disabled or have specific learning needs to make an application to study at Harper Adams. The University seeks to provide an integrated service for students with a range of disabilities or learning differences and aims to create a supportive environment in which improvements to services and facilities, and progress towards a fully inclusive environment, are constantly sought.

6.2 All applicants are sent details of the services provided by the Learner Support Department, at least once during the admissions process. All applications from those with disabilities will first be considered on their academic merits, through the standard admissions process, although in some circumstances the Admissions Officer may seek advice from the Learner Support Co-ordinator. The Learner Support Co-ordinator, with the applicant’s consent, will liaise with the Registry, Examinations Office, Estates and Facilities, the Students’ Union, Student Services and the relevant Course Manager, to ensure that reasonable adjustments can be put in place, in line with a recent needs assessment report.

- 6.3 All applicants who are invited to interview will have the opportunity to speak to a member of the Learner Support team, typically during an interview session. This invitation is open to all applicants regardless of whether they have declared a disability on their application or not, at the applicants' request.
- 6.4 If it is clear that there may be difficulties concerning admission to the applicant's chosen course, the Learner Support Co-ordinator will arrange to meet the applicant with the appropriate Course Manager. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate an applicant's support needs, in exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to make the necessary adjustments to enable an applicant to be admitted to a particular programme of study. In such circumstances the University will make every effort to provide a suitable alternative course. If that is not possible within the University, it will advise the applicant on how best to pursue their academic studies elsewhere.
- 6.5 All successful applicants will be provided with details on how to access and return the Learner Support Self-Assessment form as part of the 'Information for new Students' pack to complete prior to registration with the University. Applicants are strongly advised to return this form, indicating their disability and support needs if appropriate. The forms are sent directly to the Learner Support team, so applicants can be confident that what they enter on the form will not influence the admissions process. All applicants with a disability will be invited to contact the Learner Support Co-ordinator to discuss their needs.
- 6.6 The Learner Support team also provides targeted support for applicants who apply from vocational qualification backgrounds to help them with the transition to academic study.
- 6.7 A member of the Learner Support Team will meet all students during the registration and student induction programme. This allows any students, who have not previously made the University aware of their disability or specific learning difference, the opportunity to make an appointment to discuss their support needs. During the student induction, all students are provided with information about how they can book a dyslexia screening test if they think they may have dyslexia. Students may then decide to undertake further assessment if appropriate. Students may then progress to have a diagnostic assessment and, if appropriate, support arrangements would then be put in place, once a needs assessment has been completed.
- 6.8 The Learner Support Co-ordinator manages support available to students with disabilities and liaises, where required, with other departments with regards to adapted residential accommodation provision. The University has a commitment to ensure that students with particular needs are provided with appropriate accommodation.
- 6.9 Further information about the support available is set out in the University's Learner Support Policy.
- 6.10 The admission, retention and progression of students with disabilities is monitored annually, with a view to identify scope for enhancing admissions and support arrangements.

7. APPLICANTS WITH CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

- 7.1 The University requires all applicants with any unspent criminal conviction or charges pending to declare these at the point of application. Harper Adams does not automatically reject such applications and each case will be considered on its merits.

If an applicant is unsure whether they have an unspent conviction, the Unlock website (www.unlock.org.uk) is able to provide independent advice.

- 7.2 Where an applicant declares a criminal conviction on the application form, they would first be considered based on the standard entry requirements for the course. If the applicant would normally be progressed to interview stage, the Registry will write to the applicant and request information about the date of the conviction, the nature of the offence and sentence and invite any relevant comments from the applicant, before the application will be considered further. If the applicant does not meet the entry requirements, no information on the conviction would be requested and the applicant rejected as other applicants.
- 7.3 Following receipt of the information from the applicant, the Director of Academic Services will determine whether the applicant should be considered for admission, and the conviction set aside, or whether an Admissions Panel should be established. This will include determining whether the conviction is relevant or 'spent' (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.) The applicant will be informed of how their application is progressing through each stage of this process. If the conviction is deemed to be irrelevant and set aside, the application will continue to follow standard admissions processing.
- 7.4 In those cases where the Director of Academic Services decides that an Admissions Panel is necessary, the Head of Registry, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Student Services Manager and the relevant Course Manager shall be invited to meet and determine if admission to the course should be denied on the basis of the conviction. Legal advice, through the office of the University Secretary, may also be sought.
- 7.5 In making its decision, the Admissions Panel must consider the University's duty of care to safeguard the health and wellbeing of all of its students and staff, including the best interests of the applicant themselves, and take account of:
- (i) the nature and seriousness of the offence;
 - (ii) when the offence was committed;
 - (iii) the circumstances of the offence;
 - (iv) the frequency of offences and whether the applicant has demonstrated subsequent good behaviour following the conviction;
 - (v) whether the applicant will experience placement or career progression problems as a result of the conviction;
 - (vi) any professional body requirements.
- 7.6 The Admissions Panel may determine that it is necessary to interview the applicant in relation to their conviction, but this may not always be appropriate.
- 7.7 Where admission to the University is denied on the basis of the conviction, the applicant will be notified of the decision, and the reasons for doing so, by the Director of Academic Services.
- 7.8 Where the Admissions Panel allows the application to progress, it will do so in the normal way.
- 7.9 The University expects to be notified if an applicant has any criminal charges against them pending, or if they receive a criminal conviction at any point during the admissions process. The University will consider any such notification in line with the process described above and reserves the right to withdraw any offer made should the circumstances of a proven offence be deemed to require such action.

- 7.10 If a conviction comes to light once the student has commenced studies or occurs during the course of the students' registration, the University will take urgent steps to determine if it is still appropriate for the student to remain registered on their course, using its Disciplinary Procedures and where relevant, the Safeguarding Policy.

8. REVIEW OF ADMISSIONS DECISIONS AND COMPLAINTS

- 8.1 The University always seeks to process applications carefully and efficiently and to assess each application on its merits. It is recognised, however, that an applicant might be dissatisfied, for example, about the way in which their application was processed or about a decision not to offer a place on a course.
- 8.2 All applicants who are not offered a place on their chosen course will be informed of the decision and the reason behind it in writing. If applicants require more information on the reason behind a decision to reject their application, they should discuss their case with the Admissions Officer or the Course Manager in the first instance.
- 8.3 Applicants who believe that their application has not been handled appropriately through the admissions process should write to the Director of Academic Services setting out the nature of their concerns. As enrolled students are expected to live and study independently, as adults, the applicant only is able to complain about the way in which their application has been handled or appeal against an admissions decision, unless there are mitigating circumstances why they are unable to do so. An applicant who is unable to submit their own complaint or appeal must give written consent for somebody else to represent them. In such circumstances, the applicant should write to the Director of Academic Services requesting a 'representative nomination' form.
- 8.4 Any written representation must include full details of the complaint or appeal and the reasons behind it. This is also open to applicants who have been refused entry due to criminal convictions. This must be done within 10 working days of the decision notification to ensure that, if action is required, that it can be handled within the application cycle. If a complaint or appeal is received outside UCAS (for undergraduate applicants) or University admissions timescales, the University may be unable to reverse any decisions for the current academic year. Applicants in this situation will be informed of the course of action that will follow. The applicant should expect a response within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint or appeal against an admissions decision. The Director of Academic Services has the authority to review and adjudicate on all admissions decisions, taking into account evidence from the applicant, the Head of Registry, Admissions Officer, Course team members, Learner Support Co-ordinator and other internal and external expertise and reference points that they consider necessary. The decision of the Director of Academic Services is final.
- 8.5 Information relating to applicants who have been unsuccessful is destroyed no later than one calendar year after the start of the application year of entry.

9. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 9.1 The successful recruitment and retention of students is a key strategic goal for Harper Adams and the University is committed to the development and training of all staff, both academic and administrative, involved in the admissions process. This is to ensure a consistent and professional service for applicants.
- 9.2 The Admissions Officer maintains a processes manual which details the electronic transactions within the student record system to ensure consistency and continuation of service in the event of unplanned staff absences.

- 9.3 The Registry team receives regular training, to deal with the changes that routinely occur within admissions. The Admissions Officer will also provide Course Managers with regular updates including information on new qualifications and relevant deadline dates. Course Managers ensure that their interview teams are trained to a standard to be able to accurately assess applicants on their suitability for their chosen course, typically through briefing sessions and shadowing/mentoring for new members of interview teams.
- 9.4 Where timely and appropriate, outside agencies, such as UCAS may be asked to provide training to relevant staff.

Laura Harper
Head of Registry
June 2015

(Next scheduled review: Spring term 2016)