

Admissions Policy



**Harper Adams
University**

JULY 2017

Scope

This document outlines the Admissions Policy which is applied to applications which are received to Harper Adams University for undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research programmes. The policy is for the use of applicants and staff and those who are considering making an application to the University and only applies up to the point that an applicant becomes a student and commences their course.

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HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

ADMISSIONS POLICY

(Approved by Academic Board on 20th June 2017)

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). The Code's Expectation is that: "Recruitment, selection, and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme". The Policy has also taken into account renewed guidance from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA). The Policy ensures that the University works within the guidance for Higher Education providers published by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to ensure that applicants are provided with all the information they need to make an informed decision about their course of study, under extant consumer rights regulations. This includes the

guidance issued by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in March 2017 (*Good practice guide on publishing information for prospective undergraduate students*). 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 www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo. 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 University's Key Information Page at www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo for the policies and arrangements which apply during the course of their studies and to their Course Handbook. All applicants will be provided with a Key Information ('Terms and Conditions') document and relevant weblinks, at the point of offer so they can become familiar with the arrangements within which programmes operate, before they accept any offer and before they commence their studies.

2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMISSIONS

- 2.1 The Academic Board receives an annual report on the admission of students on to the University's taught courses, 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 the UCAS 'Course Search' 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's taught courses. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor has strategic responsibility for admissions to the University's research degree programmes. Operational responsibility is delegated to the Head of Registry, who manages the Registry team responsible for undergraduate admissions and works closely with the Postgraduate and Research student admissions officers. They also liaise closely with admissions tutors within each Course Team. Course Team members judge the potential of each applicant to succeed on programmes, taking into account qualifications, relevant experience and, for some courses, an interview through which applicant's interests, understanding and motivation for study are assessed.
- 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, inviting applicants to offer holder days, 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. As such, all applicants are advised to regularly check their emails following the submission of their application, as this is the primary communication route that the University uses with applicants and students. Applicants should also ensure that the University is informed of any changes to contact details immediately as a lack of response from an applicant could lead to an application being rejected or an offer of a place being withdrawn. 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, before the application can be progressed. For example, where a personal statement has been flagged by UCAS as potentially plagiarised, the Registry will request an explanation for the flagged submission and, if considered appropriate, request a revised statement for further consideration. Any application, which is deemed fraudulent, will be withdrawn from the process and any offers made will also be withdrawn. 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 suspended pending an investigation, which could result in the student being permanently excluded from the University. 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 For those courses where an interview is required, the Registry will make the initial assessment and decide who requires an invitation, but 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, taking into account performance (broadly reflecting their

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.

interest in, and broad knowledge of, the subject or professional area to which they have applied) at interview and their application as a whole.

- 2.8 Applicants to courses run in conjunction with Askham Bryan College and Reaseheath College (Top-ups) 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 scope of 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. Should any prospective applicant or enquirer wish to make a comment or complaint about any Harper Adams University promotional activities, they should write directly to the Director of Marketing and Communication outlining their concerns.

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 minimum academic entry requirement of the course for their application to be considered through the admissions stages below, as these are indicative of the ability of applicants who are likely to succeed on the course. Prospective 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.
- 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 full-time undergraduate courses are required to apply through UCAS, unless expressly invited to apply directly, 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 undergraduate applicants for Agriculture, Engineering, Veterinary Nursing, Veterinary Physiotherapy and the Extended Foundation Degree programme (EFDP), 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, in person, for an interview, as set out in section 5. Applicants for other undergraduate courses will not normally be required to attend an interview unless there is a perceived need for personalised discussion with any individual applicant. Where appropriate, an offer will be made on the basis of the application and an invitation will subsequently be issued for offer holders to participate in an offer holder day at which they can learn more about the University and the course. Guidance for applicants on what to expect on an interview afternoon is available on the University website. Postgraduate students are invited to an open day where they can have an informal chat with the Course Manager about the course, although this is not mandatory. Research students will be interviewed in person or by an online communications system where appropriate. All applicants, whatever the level of their intended studies, from the wider EU and overseas 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. If an applicant is not able to attend on their specified interview date, they should request an alternative as soon as possible, as alternatives

are not routinely offered where an applicant has not requested alternate arrangements and is a 'no-show'.

- 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, including:
- (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, their motivation for study, reasons for applying for the course and their career aspirations;
 - (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 substantially 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 initially of the delay and of the outcome 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 may operate a 'waiting list' in respect of availability 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 and qualifications that the applicant is studying at level 3, level 2 prior achievement, the amount of prior work experience that they have, the quality of the personal statement and reference 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. Where an applicant has previously commenced study at Higher Education level, this will also be taken into consideration and further details may be requested where the study was not completed if this is not covered in the initial application.
- 3.8 The University regularly reviews the entrance requirements for its courses and reserves the right to determine which qualifications are acceptable and what value is placed upon them. The UCAS tariff for undergraduate qualifications is used only as a guide to the comparative volume and level of demand of awards. Applicants should check the UCAS Course Search for the most up to date entry requirements specifically

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.

in relation to the qualifications they are taking or planning to take or contact the Admissions Officer for advice.

- 3.9 Applications for deferred entry are accepted and considered at the same time as all other applicants in that application year. Deferred applicants must have their offer conditions satisfied within the same application year and cannot carry conditions 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 within the application year. 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 and cannot be guaranteed. Students are subject to the fee liabilities of their year of entry cohort, rather than the admissions cycle in which they gained a place.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 All applicants, with 'live' applications will be sent information during the course of the admissions cycle, from the University's Marketing and Communications Team, to keep them informed of the latest developments at the University during the admissions year. All applicants who receive an offer will receive information in line with the guidance set out by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) for Higher Education providers. This includes a Key Information 'Terms and Conditions' document detailing the availability of course information, the instances where a course may be changed, and placement year and accommodation information. The document also contains links to policies that are applicable once a student has enrolled, including the Assessment Regulations, Attendance Policy, Debt Collection Policy, Disciplinary Policy and the Health and Wellbeing Policy. Applicants will also be provided with other material information, intended to assist them in their decision making, and typically includes the most recent version of the Admissions Policy, the University's Key Information Page at www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo and the Fees and Charges Booklet (in electronic format). They will also be provided with a cancellation notice as required under English legal regulations. All 'firm' applicants who have accepted an offer of a place will be sent a link for the 'Information for New Students' webpage in July each year. This provides the information required for applicants to make preparations to join the University at the start of the academic year, including accommodation information, payment information, 'kit lists', learner support information and information relating to car parking, internet access and the Students' Union. 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.
- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 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.

- 3.14 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. An alternative might be based either at Harper Adams University, where we will advise on the closest course available, or elsewhere or, for undergraduate students, we 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.
- 3.15 When the final results of entrance qualifications 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, vocational or other requirements as stated in the original course offer. 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, but this may not be possible in all cases.
- 3.16 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, by addressing the reasons that they were previously unsuccessful, 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. Where an identical application is submitted, the application will normally be rejected.
- 3.17 The University actively participates in the Clearing period for undergraduate applications, by taking enquiries from and offering places to suitably qualified applicants who have either not applied for, nor secured, a place during the main admissions cycle. Any offers made over the telephone, based on information provided over the telephone, during this period are made on the basis of trust in the accuracy of that information. Accordingly, all information provided by the applicant will be checked with official copies of supporting documents, as requested, where necessary. Where these checks cannot corroborate the information which the applicant has provided, the offer of the place will be withdrawn.
- 3.18 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 and are then destroyed. Where an applicant has been rejected based on an interview, the interview form may be kept for a further application cycle where the Admissions Officer determines that it would be required as a reference point to gauge improvement in any future application.
- 3.19 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 UK 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. International 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 application purposes. They may also be subject to other non-academic offer conditions which are determined by the policies of the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) department of the Home Office, where such is required for the University to fulfil its Tier 4 visa sponsorship obligations, as opposed to solely academic and vocational requirements for admission onto the course. For International students requiring a Tier 4 visa, the University will also be required to make thorough checks on their immigration history, monetary funds available and qualification history to ensure that the University is able to make an offer to an applicant within UKVI 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 UKVI in order to facilitate the visa application process. Information about visa sponsored students, post-enrolment, may also be shared with UKVI, in fulfilment of the University's visa sponsorship obligations. A separate policy on the Tier 4 sponsorship duties of the University is available on the University website and is provided to the applicants to whom it applies.

- 3.20 All applications will be processed within set internal deadline dates. Undergraduates who have applied through UCAS will also be subject to the deadlines set by UCAS, over which the University has no control. Late applications will only be considered where there is sufficient time to accurately process the application and if there are places still available. Where it is known in advance, undergraduate courses without places available will be marked as 'closed' on UCAS listings and the University website. International students requiring visa sponsorship are subject to different deadline dates to the home/EU students to ensure that visa applications can be processed. Most International 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.
- 3.21 Students at all levels will be subject to attendance monitoring throughout the course of their studies and, in line with the Attendance Policy, might be withdrawn for extended periods of poor attendance without good reason. Students requiring visa sponsorship will be subject to additional monitoring in line with UKVI requirements.
- 3.22 Prior to arrival at the University, all undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research 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. Where a student is unable to enrol online for any reason, they will be required to complete a paper enrolment form on arrival. No student is permitted to commence studies without enrolling.
- 3.23 All successful applicants are required to attend the University in person to register for their course on their allocated start date. With exceptional 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 the 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. Research students are permitted to enrol at one of two annual enrolment dates, where the preferred date will be agreed with the applicant during the admissions process.

4. MINIMISING BARRIERS TO ADMISSION

- 4.1 The University accepts a wide range of level 3 qualifications as the basis for undergraduate admission, including A levels, AS levels, BTEC Extended and National Diplomas, Scottish Highers and Advanced 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 explicitly listed. Undergraduate students are also required to have achieved a minimum number of GCSE (including Scottish and Irish equivalent qualifications) subjects at grades A*-C (or 9-4), which are not superseded by level 3 qualifications. Applicants should note that the University does not always consider qualifications which are published on national tariff schemes as equivalent to GCSEs and A levels to be so. Applicants with purported 'equivalent' qualifications, such as Key Skills and Subsidiary Diplomas should seek advice from the Admissions Officer as to the suitability of their qualifications for entry and preparation for individual programmes.
- 4.2 Taught postgraduate students are required to have the equivalent of a Second Class Honours Degree or a Higher National Diploma/Foundation Degree 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 relevant professional qualifications. Research students should typically have a minimum of a 2:1 Honours degree or equivalent Bachelor's degree in an appropriate subject for entry, although further research experience or a Master's degree is preferable.
- 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. The programme commences with a 'year 0' year during which students must satisfy the assessment regulations, to progress into year 1 of a Foundation Degree and, additionally, achieve a mean mark of between 55% and 65% for progression to a Bachelor's Degree. Work experience and other additional criteria for progression apply to some Bachelor's Degree routes, including Agriculture and Veterinary Nursing. Details of the progression routes can be found on the Extended Foundation Degree Programme pages of our website. Students must take specific module options in year '0' to progress onto certain programmes in year 1.
- 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, of at least 2 years, working in a relevant sector which would provide confidence that the applicant is likely to be successful in their studies. Applications from these applicants will be considered subject to availability of spaces once all suitably qualified candidates have been considered. Where a course is heavily oversubscribed we may be restricted in the numbers of academically unqualified applicants that we can consider.
- 4.5 A number of courses, typically Agriculture, Veterinary Nursing and Veterinary Physiotherapy, require applicants to have a minimum amount of work experience before they are accepted onto the course. Some of this experience may be required prior to interview and this is clearly stated within the course entry requirements and will be reiterated upon receipt of the application, including applicable deadlines. Where work experience forms part of the offer for the course, this must be completed by the deadline set, as we will be unable to confirm any place without it, even if the academic conditions have been met. Applicants to BSc (Hons) Agriculture courses, who at

interview have been assessed as having limited, or no access to the required work experience may be offered a place on the Access to Agriculture programme where support is provided during the first year of study to achieve the required level of work experience required.

- 4.6 The minimum age on entry is normally 17 years old. Applicants who will turn 18 by the 1st May in their first year of study 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 and students will not be permitted to enrol without having signified their consent to those restrictions.
- 4.7 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 of the intended course. 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.
- 4.8 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 (including as explained in Section 5 for Veterinary Nurses). These requirements are 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 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 or impairment 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. Where there are concerns, the University may also require applicants to demonstrate that they are able to perform the 'Day One' competencies, which are set out by the RCVS. These are the skills which a veterinary nurse should be able to perform at the start of their training. Further details can be found at <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/rcvs-day-one-skills-for-veterinary-nurses/rcvs-day-one-skills-list-sa-2016-.pdf>
- 5.7 Should a student have a condition which develops or 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. The Veterinary Health Studies award is not available for initial entry.

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 and Disability Manager. The Learner Support and Disability Manager, 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, where required, 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 applicant's request. As part of our duty of care to applicants with disabilities, where an applicant has declared a disability on their UCAS form and where there are concerns that the disability may have an ability on the applicant's ability to successfully participate in the course, the application will be flagged and the interviewer will discuss with the applicant any extra requirements they may require.
- 6.4 If it is clear that there may be difficulties concerning admission to the applicant's chosen course, the Learner Support and Disability Manager 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', to complete prior to registration with the University. Applicants are strongly advised to return this information, indicating their disability and support needs if appropriate. The information is 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 and Disability Manager 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. Applicants, who are holding a confirmed place and who are identified as being from a predominantly vocational qualification background will receive an invitation to

the Transition to Harper Adams Conference which takes place in September each year, prior to the start of the academic year.

- 6.7 The Learner Support Team will be available at new student registration for information and will meet all new students during the 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 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, reasonable adjustment support arrangements would be considered, once a needs assessment has been completed. The University's *Learning, teaching and assessment policy for students with disabilities and guidance for staff, students and applicants* sets out the arrangements by which reasonable adjustment support requests are considered.
- 6.8 The Learner Support and Disability Manager 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, wherever this is feasible and reasonable.
- 6.9 Further information about arrangements for supporting disabled applicants and students can be found in the 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy for students with disabilities and guidance for staff, students and applicants', which can be found at www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo. This includes details of how needs are assessed and how the University determines if requests for reasonable adjustments can be fulfilled.
- 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 conviction, including date of conviction, the nature of the offence and sentence and invite any relevant comments from the applicant, before the application will be considered further. The applicant will also be required to provide the contact details of an appropriate person from either the police or probation services, who the University can contact for further information. If the applicant does not meet the entry requirements, no information on the conviction would be requested and the application would be rejected in line with other applicants.
- 7.3 Following receipt of the information from the applicant, the Director of Academic Services and Head of Registry will determine whether the applicant should be considered for admission, and the conviction set aside. This will include determining whether the conviction is relevant or 'spent' (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.) This will also be discussed with the relevant Course Manager. If a decision

cannot be reached, or the nature of the conviction is particularly serious in nature, an Admissions Panel will be established. 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, without prejudice.

- 7.4 In those cases where an Admissions Panel is necessary, additional members of senior staff, such as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Student Services Manager and the relevant Course Manager shall be invited to meet with the Director of Academic Services and Head of Registry to 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 In certain circumstances, the Admissions Panel may determine that it is necessary to interview the applicant in relation to their conviction and the circumstances around it, 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, in writing by the Director of Academic Services, or nominee. Where relevant, this may include details of the timescale within which a new application may be acceptable. The applicant will be permitted to appeal this decision following the process outlined in section 8 of this document.
- 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 and Fitness to Practise requirements (where applicable). Students are required to disclose any new convictions as soon as they occur, and also confirm or amend such at enrolment at the start of each academic year. There is a section within the online enrolment form, which allows students to do this. For new in-year convictions, students should contact the Head of Registry, based in FS2 in the Faccenda Centre, to disclose details of convictions.

8. REVIEW OF ADMISSIONS DECISIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 8.1 The University always seeks to process applications carefully and efficiently and to assess each application on its merits. It is recognised 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 particular course.
- 8.2 Whilst there is provision for admissions decisions to be reviewed as set out in section 8, applicants and their advisors should note that the University reserves the right to set its own entrance requirements as referred to in section 3.8, and, in doing so, determines which qualifications are acceptable. The UCAS tariff for undergraduate qualifications is used only as a guide on the comparative volume and level of demand of qualifications. Accordingly, the University determines its own policy on which awards it considers are suitable qualifications for entry and the contribution of associated tariff points from specific awards towards meeting published entry requirements which are expressed in tariff points.
- 8.3 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. Applicants will always be considered for an alternative course or entry point where this is appropriate taking qualifications, skills and other achievements into account. Where we are unable to offer the applicant an alternative their application will be rejected and they will be advised of the reason for the rejection. If applicants require more information on the reason behind a decision to reject their application, they should discuss their case with the Admissions Officer in the first instance. The Admissions Officer will seek to provide further information including from the Course Manager, should this be required, and will respond directly to the applicant.
- 8.4 Applicants who believe that their application has not been handled appropriately through the admissions process should write to the Head of Registry setting out the nature of their concerns and to request a Review of the Admissions Decision. This should clearly set out any errors that are believed to have been made or any additional information that they have which may result in a different outcome to their application. Any such request, should be received in writing within 10 working days of the admissions decision being notified to the applicant. The Head of Registry will then make the necessary investigations into the request, including speaking to key staff involved in the admissions decision, where necessary. The applicant may also be required to provide further information. The Head of Registry will respond back to the applicant, in writing, normally within 15 working days with the outcome of the review.
- 8.5 Should an applicant be dissatisfied with the outcome of the Review of the Admissions Decision, they have the option to make a formal complaint or appeal against the decision. This must be submitted to the Director of Academic Services, and must include full details of the complaint or appeal against the decision 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 notification of the outcome of the Admissions Decision Review, or the notification of refused entry due to a criminal conviction, to ensure that, if action is required, it can be handled within the application cycle. If an appeal against the decision 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 normally 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 and Disability Manager and other internal and external expertise and

reference points that they consider necessary. The decision of the Director of Academic Services is final.

- 8.6 As enrolled students are expected to live and study independently, as adults, only the applicant is able to request a review, complain about the way in which their application has been handled or appeal against the decision, unless there are mitigating circumstances why they are unable to do so. Any applicant who is unable to submit their own review request, complaint or appeal against the decision 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.
- 8.7 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 2017

(Next scheduled review: Spring term 2018)