



Application, selection and admission to higher education: a review of international practice

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Research paper prepared for the HEA/NCCA seminar Transition or transaction? Moving from second to third level education in Ireland

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Introduction



Transition – application, selection and admissions processes

Transition to higher education involves a complex set of decisions by a range of parties to the process: students, parents, higher education institutions, higher education authorities and often a central applications agency. This report focuses on the policies, practices and processes associated with transition to higher education, to particular institutions and to individual courses. These are commonly referred to collectively as the “admission process” and in many, but not all, situations this aspect of transition also involves an element of selection.

The potential consequences of these processes for both secondary and third level education are well recognised and have prompted a recent review in Ireland. The transition to higher education has been the subject of review and critical comment since the ‘Points System’ was first introduced in Ireland, most notably by the Commission on the Points System (1999) and the range of submissions made at that time. Issues associated with transition to higher education have been more recently revisited and researched by Hyland (2011) and also feature as the theme of a special issue for *Irish Educational Studies* (2011).

The HEA/NCCA joint conference – **Transition or Transaction? Moving from second to third level education in Ireland** – aims to focus on the interface between second and third level education, on the readiness of those leaving second level for the demands of third level education and on the effects of what is commonly referred to as the points system. This review of national systems has been commissioned by the Higher Education Authority and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to inform the deliberations of the debate by offering an insight into how the transition is managed in other contexts, internationally.

The terms of reference for the review were to:

- carry out a desk review of a range of national systems/processes for the transition from school to higher education
- select a small number of systems that illustrate a range of processes and procedures – which differ from the current Irish system – by which school leavers gain entry to third level education
- present a descriptive account of the selected systems identifying the key features of each
- exclude non-standard tracks such as mature students, students with a disability, access programmes and entry to specialist areas such as medicine or art
- present the report in a format that makes it accessible, informative and supportive of the NCCA/HEA joint initiative on transition to third level education.



Methodology

Selection of cases:

Cases have been selected for this review in light of the agreed brief, with particular attention to systems that differ from that which prevails in Ireland yet offer some insights into feasible and/or instructive approaches. The examples have been drawn from the UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a separate report for Scotland), Europe (Netherlands), Australia (New South Wales), Canada (Quebec) and the United States of America (Texas). We have purposely, but not exclusively, focused on systems with a centralised admission agency and we have limited our scope to the public higher education system in each case. Summaries of each system are provided in advance of the detailed individual reports.

Sources:

Web-based material was the primary source of information for this review. The level of transparency associated with these processes means that a significant amount of detail can now be gleaned online. A range of published documents such as reports and guidelines for good practice were a valuable supplementary source of information. Review processes associated with admissions systems are a regular feature of the higher education landscape – we reference these where they exist.

The availability of published information in the English language, for a desk review, was a significant factor. Some of the detail which was required to make sense of the process and how it transacts locally, however, was not always available from publicly available sources. Interviews – face-to-face or telephone – were conducted, where possible, to elaborate on these processes and to gain feedback on draft reports. The variability in the level of detail provided in these case studies reflects the varying availability of information and of access to first-hand sources. The accuracy of the reports is subject to the scope and currency of data and the availability of feedback from informed sources.

Format of the case studies:

For each case we provide some background information, primarily relating to the nature of the higher education system and the qualifications taken prior to the transition to higher education. Key organisations with a role in the admissions process are identified, with particular attention to examinations and testing taken pre-entry, and to the respective roles of any central admissions agency and the higher education institutions. The individual case study reports provide information relating to the policy, processes and practices relating to all stages of the application, selection and admissions process. We detail how students make applications and how the process of managing and evaluating applications, allocating places and making offers is organised. We include answers to a series of 'what if' questions. While special tracks such as 'access routes' were not within the terms of reference, in some cases arrangements for providing for widening participation are a feature of the mainstream process; accordingly we include them.

Ensuring the relevance and accessibility of the report has proved challenging given the complexity of the systems and processes involved and the range of readers. The report has been prepared with a view to including the kind of information and the level of detail which may be of interest in a review of the current processes



for managing the transfer to higher education in Ireland. Of particular interest is the manner in which places in third level are allocated where courses are oversubscribed. These processes are often complex and the details may be of more interest to some constituencies than to others. Further supporting or technical details are included in appendices to each case study. Each case study concludes with a list of sources and further reading. A list of acronyms, organised by case study, is provided at the rear of the report.

Commentary – aspects of potential interest

This review aims to contribute to the national conversation about the different ways in which the application, selection and admissions systems could be planned and managed in Ireland. The term 'admissions' where used below is inclusive of all stages of the transfer process.

Reviews of international policy and practice are illuminating in that they identify and enable us to consider alternative approaches. International studies invite us to question aspects of our own context and/or practice which we may take for granted and prompt critical reflection about underpinning principles. The case studies presented in this review are descriptive in nature and we do not comment on the merits or otherwise of each system. Each has its strengths and limitations and many are still under development or subject to review. We would, nonetheless, like to draw attention to some features of potential interest in any review of the transition to higher education in Ireland:

- 1 Many systems for managing the transfer to public higher education reflect core values and **policy priorities** at a national level. These systems can also serve as instruments of public policy e.g. equity (NL, in terms of entitlement to higher education); widening participation (Texas – Uniform Admissions Policy); effective use of public funds and resources (all cases).
- 2 Within systems and within individual institutions the priority given to the processes of **recruitment** (of students to courses) and **selection** (of students where courses are oversubscribed) varies. Admissions processes also strike some balance between managing the transfer while ensuring equity and participation. Greatest attention and effort is devoted to courses for which there is competitive selection.
- 3 The concept of '**merit**' features in all admissions processes and prior academic performance is used as the primary criterion for selection for most institutions and courses. The manner in which this is measured and recorded, however, varies – grades, test scores, points, tariffs and ranks all feature (e.g. NSW, UK, Quebec). The concept of '**fairness**' underpins the allocation of scarce places by lottery to applicants that meet the entry criteria (e.g. NL).
- 4 **School leaving examinations** are generally relied upon as a measure of academic achievement where national curricula and examinations systems are in place (e.g. NSW, Scotland). In the absence of a common school leaving curriculum or examination, systems have been devised to enable the results of students to be compared and in most cases, ranked (e.g. Quebec).
- 5 Formal arrangements are in place for establishing **equivalence** between school-leaving qualifications and a range of other qualifications (e.g. UCAS tariff – UK). The use of qualifications and credit frameworks has enabled a wide range of progression pathways into higher education (UK and NSW).



- 6 **Admissions tests** are designed to determine aptitude for progression to higher education (e.g. general aptitude tests SAT/ACT in Texas and specialist tests e.g. HPAT for medicine or LSAT for law). These tests serve as a significant element in the admissions decision-making process, in addition to scores/ranks gained on school tests.
- 7 **'College readiness'** – in the US – is a programme of assessment, advice, developmental education and student support designed to ensure students have the skills they need to succeed in college. The assessment of college readiness takes place prior to enrolment. If a student has not achieved a passing standard then the higher education institution will design an individual plan that is appropriate to the student, to enable them to attain the required standard (e.g. Texas Success Initiative – Texas).
- 8 Where **information other than academic scores** is used in the selection process (e.g. Personal Statements in UK, Personal Achievement Index in Texas), policies and guidelines are generally in place to ensure consistency in their use. The use of interviews as a means of determining suitability for entry is generally confined to specialist professional areas (e.g. teaching, medicine) or where interviews serve a guidance/advisory function. Data other than academic achievement is sometimes excluded in decision-making (NL, Scotland and Quebec).
- 9 Strategies for **widening participation** are integrated into the mainstream application process in some systems as a means of addressing inequality of opportunity (e.g. the use of contextual data in UK, or the Top 10% law in Texas).
- 10 **Discrimination** between levels of academic achievements ranges from (i) highly differentiated mark/rank scores (e.g. ATAR in NSW) which facilitate separation of individuals to (ii) broad grade bands whereby groups of students are treated as being not significantly different (e.g. in NL or in Scottish universities where Higher examination grades are used). In the latter case various methods are used to discriminate within groups of individuals e.g. Personal Statement (Scotland) and drawing of lots (in NL).
- 11 Where **lotteries** are used in the selection processes, the concept of 'fairness' is regarded as treating as equal all those who are not significantly different in terms of prior academic attainment. Recent refinements of the 'weighted lottery' system have ensured its continuity as a means of offering an opportunity – a chance – of gaining entry to all those who meet the entry requirements for high-demand courses (NL). Places are awarded by lottery to applicants grouped into wide grade bands; the higher the grade, the better the chance of being drawn.
- 12 **Central admissions agencies** feature routinely as part of national systems (e.g. UK, NL, NSW, Texas). The role they play, however, varies, as does the extent to which higher education institutions retain autonomy in the selection process. In some cases, the higher education institutions' autonomy in decision-making is a highly valued part of the systems (e.g. UK) and a trend towards greater devolution of decision-making to institutions can be observed (e.g. NL).
- 13 Where **institutions** play a central role in evaluating applications (e.g. UK, Quebec), the extent to which this is managed centrally by an **Admissions Office** (e.g. University of Manchester) or devolved to academic units/faculties (e.g. universities in Scotland and Quebec) varies amongst the institutions.



- 14 **Online web-based** processes for managing applications are used in all cases where a central applications agency exists (e.g. Apply Texas, Studilink in NL and UCAS in UK). Students submit applications and generally receive offers online. Many such systems also serve as an information hub.
- 15 The application, selection and admission process is **costly** in terms of time, human resources and infrastructure. The costs are shared differentially by the applicants (and their parents), the institutions and central applications agencies. Affordability is inevitably a factor for students. In some cases they pay to take admissions or other standardised tests (e.g. Texas, Quebec). The student fee for application ranges from zero (NL) to \$60 - 90CAN per university application (Quebec). Institutions generally pay a membership fee (based on number of applications/offers) to the relevant central applications agencies.

References

- Commission on the Points System (1999) *Final Report and Recommendations* Dublin: Government Publications Office
- Hyland, A. (2011) *Entry to Higher Education in Ireland in the 21st Century* Dublin: Higher Education Authority and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
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Overview of Case Studies



CASE	KEY FEATURES
Netherlands	<p>Admission to higher education is open to all those who have successfully completed secondary education and passed one of three kinds of final examination. This is the cornerstone of education policy in the Netherlands. Students apply to higher education (a Research University or a University of Applied Science) through an online central admission process, Studielink. A weighted lottery system is used to determine access to a course and/or institution where the demand exceeds the availability of places. Using this system, the higher an applicant's score on their school leaving results, the greater the chance they have of being selected. Higher education institutions can also choose to exercise their autonomy in the selection process by determining admission to a certain percentage of places on a course. In such cases other criteria, in addition to school leaving examination results, may apply.</p>
New South Wales, Australia	<p>Australian universities are supported in the admission and selection of students for higher education by centralised admissions agencies across the Australian States and Territories. In New South Wales the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) performs this function. Prior academic achievement is used as the basis for the selection of undergraduates. In 2009, all Australian states (except Queensland) adopted a common ranking system and nomenclature for undergraduate admissions known as the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). The ATAR reports a student's position relative to other students. In New South Wales the ATAR is derived from a student's performance in the Higher School Certificate. University places are offered on the basis of this ranking. Some programmes have additional selection criteria, such as a portfolio, interview, audition, questionnaire or test.</p>
Quebec, Canada	<p>In Quebec, students who wish to go to university generally complete a two-year pre-university college programme, at colleges set up for this purpose, called CEGEP. This case study looks at the transition from CEGEP to University. The general policy of universities is to accept all applicants who meet the general and specific admission requirements to a programme. When a selection has to be made, usually due to enrolment limits, each university decides if and to what extent a student's academic record should be used in the selection process. The use of academic records for the purpose of selection assumes that there is a common basis for evaluation of students and their learning experiences, and that the grading methods used in their respective CEGEP are inherently the same. CEGEP regulations ensure the autonomy of each college in the evaluation of learning. Consequently universities have devised a way of classifying students for selection by using statistical methods to correct for observed differences in the grading systems used by the colleges. This measure (the R score) adjusts results so as to take into account the relative strength of each group of students. There is no central applications system for university applications in Quebec.</p>



Texas, USA	<p>A unique feature of the Texas higher education system is the Top 10% law. Students who have their high school diploma and rank in the top 10% of their high school class are automatically admitted to a public college or university of their choosing. Beyond this law, public community and technical colleges are “open admissions” institutions, generally requiring that a student has a high school diploma or its equivalent. Public universities set their own admissions requirements. Applicants must have a high school diploma or its equivalent and most universities require applicants to take either the SAT or ACT admissions test. Some universities require other information for a more holistic decision making processes. Application to higher education is centralised for most institutions via ‘ApplyTexas’ or The Common Application. All students (except those who score highly in certain tests) must take the Texas Success Initiative test before enrolling in a public college or university – this is a test of reading, writing and mathematics skills needed for success in college (a measure of ‘college readiness’). Students who need to improve their skills will receive the appropriate support at the college or university on admission.</p>
UK (England, Wales, NI)	<p>Higher education institutions in the UK set entry criteria for their own programmes and are responsible for making offers of places to applicants. The autonomy which HEIs have in this regard is a highly valued element of the system. Students apply through a centralised applications system called UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions System). UCAS manages the applications and admissions process. A tariff system (which involves assigning points to grades gained on qualifications recognised for entry to HE) has been in place since 2000. HEIs can use tariff points to express the entry requirements for a course, and offers (conditional or unconditional) can also be expressed in terms of tariff points and/or grades. Universities within the Russell Group (a collaboration of 20 research-intensive universities) tend not to use the UCAS tariff as a means of expressing entry requirements or making offers but use the UCAS system for managing the application and offers process. Within the admissions process other contextual data may also be used. This allows institutions to make a holistic assessment of an applicant’s potential in the context of barriers which they may have encountered. The UCAS admissions system and the tariff are both currently under review.</p>
Scotland	<p>The admissions system for entry to higher education in Scotland is administered by higher education institutions (HEIs) in conjunction with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Students applying to Scottish university apply through UCAS and the same processes apply as detailed in the report for the UK. A number of Scottish universities do not frame offers in terms of UCAS tariff points, nor do they make use of the tariff at confirmation. They generally express entry requirements in terms of grades gained in Scottish ‘Highers’, indicating equivalences with other qualifications.</p>



Country/State/ Territory	Netherlands	
1	<p>Summary</p> <p>Admission to higher education is open to all those who have successfully completed secondary education and passed one of three kinds of final examination. This is the cornerstone of education policy in the Netherlands. Students apply to higher education (a Research University or a University of Applied Science) through an online central admission process, Studielink.</p> <p>A weighted lottery system is used to determine access to a course and/or institution where the demand exceeds the availability of places. Using this system, the higher an applicant's score on their school leaving results, the greater the chance they have of being selected. Higher education institutions can also choose to exercise their autonomy in the selection process by determining admission to a certain percentage of places on a course. In such cases other criteria, in addition to school leaving examination results, may apply.</p> <p>The most significant changes to the selection process in recent years have been a) the development of a weighting that means higher achievement in a secondary examination is valued and b) increased possibilities for decentralising the selection process to institutions, initially for a maximum of 10% then to 50% of places (100% is now under discussion).</p>	
2	<p>Country context</p> <p>Education system prior to HE</p> <p>From age 12, different types of secondary education (see below) cater for students of differing abilities and aptitudes. Progression is based on successful completion of primary education, the outcome of the so-called Cito-test ("Eindoets basisonderwijs") a centrally developed test which measures students' level of knowledge and understanding, combined with the advice of teaching staff.</p> <p>Transfer opportunities exist between these three routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-university secondary education (VWO) – 6 years • General secondary education (HAVO) – 5 years • Pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) – 4 years. <p>Certain requirements for the curriculum for secondary education are set by legislation. At least two thirds of hours in the lower years of secondary education (for 12- to 15-year-olds) must be focused on 58 core objectives which are determined centrally. The school itself translates these objectives into subjects, projects, areas of learning and combinations of all three, or into competence-based teaching, for example.</p>	



2 Country context

The remainder of the curriculum is subject to statutory requirements, which vary according to the precise type of secondary education (VMBO, HAVO or VWO). Continuous teacher assessment takes place throughout secondary education. National (minimum) core objectives are defined for lower secondary education and revised every five years or so. There are prescribed attainment targets for final (upper secondary) examinations. In the syllabuses these attainment targets are worked out in more detail. *VMBO* examinations are in two parts: internal school examinations and national examinations. A similar arrangement exists for the *HAVO* and *VWO* qualifications, although for some subjects studied only a school examination is taken.

Student performance on their final secondary examination can be expressed as an average score with 10 as the maximum score. An average score of 8 or over brings automatic access to courses with restrictions on entry.

VET: vocational secondary education (MBO) for six months- 4 years

Vocational training programmes and block release programmes leading to qualification from assistant to middle management, generally taken following pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO).

Higher education

Netherlands higher education system, comprises:

1. **Universities of Applied Science (UAS)** provide theoretical and practical training for occupations which require higher professional qualifications. 41 UAS institutions provide programmes to bachelor and masters level. They have become broad-based knowledge institutions and prepare students directly for careers in several sectors: economics and business administration engineering and technology, commerce, finance, leisure, tourism, marketing, health care. [Also referred to as higher professional education (*HBO*)]

<http://www.hbo-raad.nl/hogescholen/overzicht-hogescholen>



	<p>2. Research Universities (RU) offer training in the independent pursuit of scholarship and/or the application of knowledge in the context of a profession. 17 research universities provide courses in higher education (bachelor and masters level) and carry out research. Some universities specialise in particular areas; e.g. three universities focus predominantly on engineering and technology. The Open University (Open Universiteit) of the Netherlands offers adults a means of pursuing higher education without admission requirements and at their own pace, through distance education. [Also referred to as university education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs or WO)]</p> <p>There are three types of institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government-funded institutions (UAS and RU) • Legal entities not government-funded but covered by the higher education legislation • Private sector institutions to which Dutch legislation and regulations do not apply. <p>http://www.eurogates.nl/en_dutch_universities_the_netherlands/</p>
<p>3 Organisations involved in process</p>	<p>Ministry for Education, Culture and Science (DUO) DUO is the central institution for applications, placement and allocation of grants (a result of a merger in 2010). http://www.ib-groep.nl/particulieren/default.asp</p> <p>Studielink is the online applications system for all those applying to higher education in the Netherlands. http://info.studielink.nl/en/studenten/Pages/Default.aspx</p> <p>Central Applications and Placement (CABP) The Central Applications and Placement Office (Dutch: CBAP) registers the applications of students at a college or university, and implements the procedures surrounding the central admissions lottery on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.</p> <p>Higher Education Institutions</p> <p>Universities of Applied Science (UAS), Research Universities (RU) and Open University (as described above).</p> <p>For international students wishing to study in the Netherlands: http://www.ib-groep.nl/International_visitors/default.asp</p>



4	Entry entitlement	<p>What is the level of entitlement and participation in higher education?</p> <p>By law, admission to higher education in the Netherlands is open to all students who have successfully completed secondary education and hold the HAVO, MBO-4 or VWO certificate or an equivalent qualification. The entitlement and the general entry requirements are set by the state. Access to some higher education programmes, however, may require a specific profile of secondary education or specific selection of subjects in the final secondary exam.</p> <p>Where no restrictions on numbers apply, students are free to enrol on whichever course and at whichever institution they wish, if they meet the entry requirements. For courses subject to a quota ('numerus fixus') there is a weighted draw for places (see details below).</p> <p>The level of participation in education is generally regarded as high: of the Netherlands' 16 million inhabitants, nearly 3.5 million attend some form of educational programme. One out of three school-leavers now completes a first university degree. http://english.minocw.nl/english/education/index.html</p>	
5	General entry requirements	<p>Admission Requirements (Universities of Applied Science)</p> <p>Applicants wishing to be admitted to UAS higher professional education must possess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a senior general secondary education (<i>HAVO</i>) certificate or • a mid-management or specialist training certificate (MBO4) or • a pre-university education (<i>VWO</i>) certificate. <p>Applicants possessing any of the above qualifications have in principle the right to be admitted, but institutions can impose additional requirements regarding the subjects studied.</p>	<p>Admission Requirements (Research Universities)</p> <p>Admission to university is possible to holders of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a pre-university secondary certificate (<i>VWO</i>) or • an UAS qualification or • UAS propaedeutic cert (preparatory course). <p><i>HAVO</i> and <i>VWO</i> involve four subject combinations. Universities now have had to indicate which of these subject combinations are required for admission to each course. A maximum of two subjects can be made compulsory, or one or more components of an UAS course.</p> <p>Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may be admitted after passing a viva voce entrance examination.</p>



6	Application process	<p>How do students apply?</p> <p>Students apply to the Central Applications and Placement Office (CBAP) through an online system, Studielink, which links institutional administrations and the Information Management Group, enabling an exchange of information.</p> <p>Applicants set up a Studielink account, enter personal details and fill out the enrolment application, where they are asked to enter information about their previous education. This information is checked via the General Register of Student Numbers (exam data) or alternatively the institution for higher education where they are going to study requests copies of qualifications and results. Application must be made before May 15th.</p> <p>For courses that get more applications than there are places available, lots are drawn.</p> <p>The law stipulates that applicants can register for no more than one quota study.</p> <p>The quota is conducted by DUO (details below).</p> <p>For courses in universities which are subject to a quota, applicants rank institutions in order of preference.</p> <p>http://info.studielink.nl/en/studenten/Pages/Default.aspx</p>
7	Selection process	<p>How are places allocated?</p> <p>(i) For courses without a quota – the majority of courses</p> <p>Where no restrictions on numbers apply, students are free to enrol on whichever course and at whichever institution they wish, if they meet the entry requirements.</p> <p>(ii) For course subject to a quota ("numerous fixus") – a limited range, mostly in health sciences</p> <p>For courses subject to a quota ("numerus fixus"), a weighted draw for places is held i.e. where the maximum number of first-year students that may be admitted to a particular course and/or institution is restricted. There are two types of fixed quotas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course quota: where there are insufficient places for a specific course, nationally, for those wishing to enrol e.g. in medicine or dentistry (this kind of quota only arises in research universities). If the course is taught at several institutions the applicant states his/her preference in rank order.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional quota: if the number of places for a course at one or more institutions is not sufficient to accommodate all those wishing to enrol, a quota is established for the institutions(s) in question. If an applicant does not draw a place for the course of their 1st choice they can study at another institution, if there are no further limitations there. Where there is an institutional quota at all institutions offering that course then an applicant must await a second draw. <p>How does the selection process work?</p> <p>Where a quota exists an applicant can be admitted in one of two ways:</p> <p>a) Centralised selection</p> <p>Central selection uses a 'weighted' lottery system in combination with results from school examinations or other qualifying awards. The higher an applicant's final exam results the higher the chance of being selected.</p> <p>b) Decentralised selection</p> <p>An institution can select a certain percentage (e.g. 10%-50%) of the applicants for a course on the basis of certain selection criteria which can be determined by the institution itself (details below).</p> <p>http://www.staffs.ac.uk/access-studies/docs/IR-Netherlands.doc</p>
<p>8 The weighted quota system</p>	<p>How does the lottery work?</p> <p>An amended system of weighted draws (post-Drenth Report) is now used in the lottery for fixed quota courses/institutions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Final secondary school examination scores are recorded as simple scores (from 1-10) per subject (usually 6-7 subjects taken) 2. Applicants are assigned to different categories (A-F), on the basis of their average score. This is converted to a grade A-F. (Category G (other) includes international students, irrespective of their result). This category determines the likelihood of obtaining a place. 3. See estimate of a typical distribution of students across the grade bands - below 4. The chance of being drawn in the reformed weighted lottery (post Drenth Report).



1	Average Exam Score	<8.5	8.0-8.5	7.5-8.0	7.0-7.5	6.5-7.0	> 6.5	Other
2	Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
3	Approx % of cohort getting that grade	2%	5%	9%	21%	22%	30%	12%
4	Chance of being drawn	100%	100%	100%	Weighted draw	Weighted draw	Weighted draw	Weighted draw

Adapted from Boyle, C. (2010) Lotteries for Education: Origins experience and lessons Exeter: Imprint Academic

What is an applicant's chance of getting a place?

All candidate gaining A, B and C grades are automatically awarded a place, provided they have the right combination of subjects. The remainder of places are allocated by weighted lottery, the higher the grade, the greater the chance of being drawn for a place. That is, a higher % of applicants in Category D are chosen, a lower % from Category E, and lower % again from Category F (for any draw, the %s will depend on the number of places and the level of demand).

An applicant's chance of admission is $f(x)$ where f is a monotonically increasing function of their average exam score.

Where a course quota applies, applicants can participate in the selection for their preferred course only; if their second choice also as a quota they cannot participate in that selection.

Where an institutional quota applies, applicants can only participate in selection procedure for their preferred institution; if their second choice also has a quota they cannot participate in that selection.

Applicants with the wrong combination of subjects for a course are no longer allowed to take part in a draw.



9

Role of HEIs in the selection process

How do HEIs make decisions on offers?

For courses where there are no restrictions, institutions accept all qualified applicants.

For fixed quota courses, the centralised selection process outlined above applies.

Institutions, however, are able to select some students themselves (decentralised admissions). UAS institutions and research universities may allocate a limited number of places to applicants they have selected themselves, for instance on the basis of research or job experience. A committee of experts is to issue recommendations concerning the procedures, criteria and parameters to be applied.

The number of places to be allocated cannot exceed 50% of the total available places, minus the number of students with a grade 8 or over, who have been awarded places automatically. There are plans to expand the maximum allowable by decentralised process to 100% (ref: Eurydice (2009)).

Decentralised selection procedures by institutions

In the case of courses for which lots are drawn, HEIs can select their students for a certain percentage of the available places. This means that the institution decides which candidates best meet specific selection criteria. These criteria are defined by the institutions themselves.

In addition to the specific selection criteria defined by the HEIs, a number of general conditions apply:

- they must join the central selection procedure for the same course
- they must meet the requirements for prior education and subjects chosen before the start of the study year
- they can apply directly to one institution for (no more than) one course.



Two examples:

The **University of Amsterdam (UvA)** and the **Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA)**, a University of Applied Sciences, have joined forces in a strategic partnership and between them they offer a differentiated selection of programmes. Though the main distinction between research universities and applied sciences lies in the orientation of their curricula the statutory requirements imply a significant difference in level. The HvA's practice orientated study programmes, however, offer sufficient challenges not only for students with a HAVO or MBO education, but for those with a VWO (pre-university secondary education) background also. <http://www.english.uva.nl/start.cfm>

Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA) 40,000 students (2010)	University of Amsterdam (UvA) 30,000 students (2010)																				
HvA trains a mix of students in a broad range of technical fields. It serves as a knowledge institution where teaching and research contribute to advancing community and professional practice in and around the city of Amsterdam.	UvA is a broad research-intensive institution that provides academic training in all areas of science and scholarship.																				
<p>Programme: International Financial Management 180 ECTS credits, 3 years</p> <p>Admission (as per statutory requirements) Secondary school graduates are eligible for admission if they have obtained one of the following diplomas:</p> <p>Dutch diplomas:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="547 1294 1018 1675"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Nature & Technology</th> <th>Nature & Health</th> <th>Economics & Society</th> <th>Culture & Society</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>HAVO</td> <td>No further req.</td> <td>Economics or M&O</td> <td>No further req.</td> <td>Economics or M&O + Math A or B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VWO</td> <td>No further req.</td> <td>Economics or M&O</td> <td>No further req.</td> <td>Economics or M&O</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MBO</td> <td>Level 4</td> <td>Level 4</td> <td>Level 4</td> <td>Level 4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Equivalences – Foreign diplomas Completion of secondary education on a level equivalent to the Dutch HAVO, VWO or MBO level 4 diploma (i.e. university entrance level) with at least a pass in business studies or accounting and mathematics. For example: GCSEs with two or more A-levels (UK), International Baccalaureate Diploma (International schools, UK and US).</p>		Nature & Technology	Nature & Health	Economics & Society	Culture & Society	HAVO	No further req.	Economics or M&O	No further req.	Economics or M&O + Math A or B	VWO	No further req.	Economics or M&O	No further req.	Economics or M&O	MBO	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	<p>Programme: Economics and Business B.Sc. 180 ECTS credits, 3 years</p> <p>Admission (as per statutory requirements) General entry requirements Dutch VWO diploma or equivalent, with Mathematics and English included in the final examination. Tuition fees: EU/EEA €1,713 per year</p> <p>Medicine and Dentistry Additional entry requirements School subjects: Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics</p> <p>Quotas: There are quotas for programmes in Medicine and Dentistry. A national system of selection is used for these programmes. Since there are more than three times as many applicants as places that are available, chances of being admitted are not high.</p>
	Nature & Technology	Nature & Health	Economics & Society	Culture & Society																	
HAVO	No further req.	Economics or M&O	No further req.	Economics or M&O + Math A or B																	
VWO	No further req.	Economics or M&O	No further req.	Economics or M&O																	
MBO	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4																	



10	Other criteria	<p>Are other admissions tests or interviews used in the admissions process?</p> <p>For some UAS courses (even those without a quota) specific skills, knowledge or qualities are required. They are defined in the additional requirements by the institution in question. If an applicant wants to take up such a course, they have to apply to the institution. They will test applicants for the additional requirements and will then decide whether or not an applicant can be admitted. As soon as an applicant knows they will be admitted, they have to apply with DUO. Courses with special requirements are indicated on line http://www.ib-groep.nl/International_visitors/Studying_in_the_Netherlands/Application_higher_education/Additional_requirements/s20_overview_courses.asp</p> <p>Decentralised applications: Universities may stipulate criteria for certain courses which an applicant must meet, in addition to the general conditions. These primary selection criteria pertain to prior education, subjects chosen at school, or work experience. Besides this, the criteria for decentralised selection are mainly related to specific knowledge and skills deemed important by the institution. Specific requirements for such courses are detailed centrally on the DUO website http://www.ib-groep.nl/International_visitors/Studying_in_the_Netherlands/Application_higher_education/Decentralised_selection/s20_decentralised_selection_courses.asp</p> <p>Is there any other information available to CPAB and the admitting HEI (e.g. personal or contextual data)?</p> <p>Decisions are made on the basis of academic scores and any other criteria relevant to the programme of study only.</p>
11	Making offers	<p>Getting an offer?</p> <p>If an applicant is selected in the draw then the institution sends a Statement of Admission (Bewijs van toelating) and applicants have four weeks to enrol at the institution, otherwise the offer is no longer valid. Applicants return this to the DUO.</p> <p>Applicants can apply (under certain circumstances) to receive a Provisional Statement of Admission when there are special circumstances, e.g. medical reasons, which prevent an applicant from making use of the offer in the coming academic year. The place allocated will remain reserved for such students for one year.</p>



12 What happens if...?

What happens if a applicant does not receive an offer?

If an applicant does not receive a place for a fixed quota course they receive a Statement of Exclusion.

If their 2nd choice is for an unrestricted course then the DUO will process the application and they may receive an offer from the relevant institution.

If they do not get a place at an institution with a quota they may get a place at an institution without one, once they meet the enrolment criteria for that institution.

Occasionally after lots have been drawn for a fixed quota, a second draw may be held if places remain.

What happens if they don't get their course of 1st choice?

If an applicant is unsuccessful in the draw for their 1st choice course they can make a case for 'an injustice of a paramount nature'.

In a limited number of cases DUO can allocate places under this clause and an applicant will receive a Statement of Admission for the next academic year. A full account of the possible circumstances where an 'injustice of paramount nature' may be considered (e.g. medical grounds) and circumstances which are not taken into account (e.g. family tradition) is provided by DUO.

What happens if they don't get the institution of their choice?

Where an applicant gets their first choice of course but not their first choice of institution then they need to prove that not having a place at that institution signifies an 'injustice of paramount significance' (e.g. on medical, economic or social grounds). DUO can allocate a maximum of 5% of places to successful appellants, for the following academic year.

Post-allocative trading of study opportunities is a reported feature of the Dutch system, whereby student A, admitted to a medical school in University X can trade (for a price) place with a student B who was successful in gaining a place in University Y (student A institution of first choice). (Elster 1989 cited in Boyle (2010)).

What happens if a successful applicant wishes to defer a place?

Deferrals are only offered only in exceptional circumstances, generally supported by evidence from a physician. All such matters are dealt with by the DUO.

http://www.ib-groep.nl/Images/12182%20Lottery%20Foreign%20Diploma_tcm7-24831.pdf



13	Review process/new developments	<p>Education Council recommendations on Examinations and Examination Procedures http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/english/files/examinations-and-examination-procedures/item317</p> <p>Widening participation and lifelong learning</p> <p>In practice: lifelong learning is still at an early stage says the Council for Education in the Netherlands, in their recommendations in relation to Lifelong Learning: "Although lifelong learning has obviously received a lot of attention at the policy-making level, there has been little consistent or systematic action on the ground so far. Both in private education and in state education, steps are needed to arrive at a structure that offers a clear and comprehensive view of all education available in this segment. Many providers, particularly in senior secondary vocational education and university education, do not consider that this theme is one they need to be concerned about. The higher professional education sector is already offering pathways tailored to the needs of adult learners. The private education market is filling the gap, resulting in a fragmented offering. The Education Council intends to make further recommendations on this in 2009". http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/english/files/lifelong-learning/item2552</p> <p>Report on Decentralised Selection (Dutch only) http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/upload/publicaties/497/documenten/rapport_commissie_decentrale_toelating.pdf</p>
		<p>Sources and websites for further details:</p> <p>Boyle, C (2010) <i>Lotteries for Education: Origins experience and lessons</i> Exeter: Imprint Academic</p> <p>DUO: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science http://www.ocwduo.nl/</p> <p>DUO: IB-Groep http://www.ib-groep.nl/particulieren/default.asp</p> <p>Studielink http://info.studielink.nl/en/studenten/Pages/Default.aspx</p> <p>Universities of Applied Science (HBO) http://www.hbo-raad.nl/hogescholen/overzicht-hogescholen</p> <p>Higher Education in Netherlands http://www.eurogates.nl/en_dutch_universities_the_netherlands/</p> <p>Education Council of the Netherlands http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/english/</p> <p>Other sources:</p> <p>Eurydice (2009) Organisation of the Education Systems in the Netherlands 2008/9: Eurydice Report http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/NL_EN.pdf</p> <p>Eurydice ((2005) National Summary Sheet on Education Systems in Europe and Ongoing Reforms http://www.tickle-project.eu/project/documents/education_systems/Netherlands_EN.pdf</p> <p>Information about the Lottery for Students with a Foreign Diploma http://www.ib-groep.nl/Images/12182%20Lottery%20Foreign%20Diploma_tcm7-24831.pdf</p> <p>QCDA: INCA Summary Profile of Education in the Netherlands http://www.inca.org.uk/netherlands-system-mainstream.html</p> <p>Tupan-wenno and Wolff, R. International Comparative Research: Under -Represented groups in Tertiary Education http://www.staffs.ac.uk/access-studies/docs/IR-Netherlands.doc</p>



Country/State/ Territory	New South Wales, Australia	
1	Summary	<p>Australian universities are supported in the admission and selection of students for higher education by centralised admissions agencies across the Australian States and Territories. In New South Wales the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) performs this function. Prior academic achievement is used as the basis for the selection of undergraduates. In 2009, all Australian states (except Queensland) adopted a common ranking system and nomenclature for undergraduate admissions known as the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). The ATAR reports a student's position relative to other students. In New South Wales the ATAR is derived from a student's performance in the Higher School Certificate (HSC). University places are offered on the basis of this ranking. Some programmes have additional selection criteria, such as a portfolio, interview, audition, questionnaire or test.</p>
2	Country context	<p>Education system prior to Higher Education</p> <p>The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is the school exit certificate awarded by the Board of Studies NSW. It marks the completion of 13 years of schooling. It is the gateway to further study and employment and it presents a profile of student achievement in a set of courses.</p> <p>To be eligible for an HSC a student must complete a pattern of courses to include:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph TD A[In both Year 11 and 12 subject choice must include:] --- B[Two units of Board developed English courses] A --- C[Six units of Board developed courses] A --- D[Three courses of 2 units or greater, either Board developed or Board endorsed] A --- E[Four subjects] </pre> </div> <p>Board developed courses are set and examined by the Board of Studies. Most Board developed courses are 2 units in value and they count in the calculation of the ATAR. Board of Studies courses have a school-based assessment component.</p> <p>Board endorsed courses, on the other hand, are courses developed by schools, TAFE and universities. They count towards a HSC but do not have a HSC examination and do not contribute towards calculation of an ATAR.</p>



For most courses the Board reports student achievement against published standards by:

- an examination mark
- a school assessment mark
- an HSC mark (this is the average of the examination mark and the school assessment)
- a performance band.

These results are shown on a Record of Achievement. For most Board developed courses a Course Report is also provided which describes the standards achieved for the courses (using performance bands) and provides a graph showing the student's position in the course candidature. Performance band descriptors, which describe typical achievement at different standards (bands), have been developed for each course. There are six bands for 2-unit courses and four for extension courses.

Example: Bands for 2 unit courses

Band	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mark range	0-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-100

HSC Pathways

Most students study for the HSC during Years 11 and 12. However, HSC Pathways offers a more flexible programme for people who wish to combine their studies with employment or other commitment, such as family care or elite sporting or cultural pursuits. HSC Pathways take into account aspects of recognition such as the accumulation of the HSC over a number of years, repeating courses, recognition of prior learning, accelerated study, and school based traineeships and apprenticeships.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

VET refers to vocational education and training in Australia as a whole. TAFE (Technical and Further Education) is the VET system provided by the government. VET courses are available at school, through TAFE NSW and private sector providers. VET courses contribute towards the HSC and the Australian Qualifications Framework VET credentials. Some of the NSW Board of Studies VET developed courses have an optional HSC examination where results can count towards an ATAR.



TAFE NSW courses are available at 130 locations in NSW as well as online. Many TAFE NSW courses offer credit transfer pathways to university or higher education qualifications through arrangements with higher education providers in NSW and other parts of Australia. 'Articulation' agreements define the amount of credit a TAFE qualification will contribute towards a university or higher education qualification. For more information about TAFE visit the website www.tafensw.edu.au

Approximately 30% of students go straight to university after completing the HSC, 30% go to TAFE and 30% go into the workforce.

Higher education institutions

Post-secondary education in Australia is conducted by approved higher education institutions. It leads to undergraduate and postgraduate awards listed in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

Higher education is provided by:

1. **Universities** - There are 11 universities in NSW. Universities are established under, and operate within, the parameters of NSW legislation. They exercise full control over their academic and administrative affairs. Universities are funded by the Commonwealth government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Universities also derive revenue from other sources including student fees and charges. Admission to university in NSW is determined by the individual institution. The Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) receives and processes applications for admission to most undergraduate courses at NSW universities.
2. **Non self-accrediting institutions** - Currently, these institutions are registered and their courses are accredited by State and Territory accrediting agencies under the requirements of the National Protocols for Higher Education Approvals Processes (National Protocols). Accredited courses must meet the requirements of the AQF.
3. A small number of **self-accrediting higher education institutions**, established prior to the National Protocols, with authority to accredit their higher education courses.



3

Organisations involved in process

Universities Admissions Centre (NSW & ACT) Pty Ltd (UAC)

The UAC is a university owned company that receives and processes applications for admission to most undergraduate courses at NSW universities. UAC also notifies NSW students of their ATAR.

Technical and Further Education NSW (TAFE NSW)

The Technical and Further Education Commission, known as TAFE NSW, is a provider of vocational education and training.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The AQF is the national framework of qualifications for school, VET and the higher education sectors in Australia. The AQF is a structure of recognised and endorsed qualifications designed to promote lifelong learning and provide pathways through Australia's education and training system.

Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA)

The TEQSA was established in 2011 by the Australian government as the new national regulatory and quality agency for higher education. TEQSA is an independent body with powers to regulate university and non-university higher education providers, to monitor quality and to set standards. Its primary task will be to ensure that students receive a high quality education at any of the higher education providers.

Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)

AUQA is an independent national agency that promotes, audits and reports on quality assurance in Australian higher education. AUQA is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee.

Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET)

Private education and training providers that offer qualifications at levels from basic short courses to post-graduate degrees are members of ACPET. Applications to private institutions are by direct application.



4 Key Elements

Background to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)

From 1998 to 2008 the academic achievement of students in NSW and the ACT (Australian Capital Territory) was reported via the Universities Admission Index (UAI). The ranking indices used in other states had different names. The Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres (ACTAC) agreed to adopt a common name for the ranking index, the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), across all states and territories.

For the purpose of selection, tertiary institutions are concerned with ranking school leavers. The importance of HSC marks is that they convey information about a student's position in relation to other students. Because of the lack of comparability of HSC marks achieved in different courses, either when reported against standards or in terms of ranking, marks of individual students are scaled before they are added to give the aggregates from which the ATAR is determined.

What is the ATAR?

The ATAR is a numerical measure of a student's overall academic achievement in the HSC in relation to that of other students. This measure allows the overall achievement of students who have completed different combinations of HSC courses to be compared. The ATAR is a rank, not a mark, and it is calculated solely for use by tertiary institutions, either on its own or in conjunction with other criteria, to select school leavers for admission. A student's HSC marks and the ATAR are derived using the same data, i.e. raw examination marks and school assessment marks. Calculation of the ATAR is the responsibility of the Technical Committee on Scaling (TCOS) on behalf of the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Information on the ATAR is provided by the UAC.

The ATAR aims to provide a fair and equitable method of ranking applicants. It is a number which represents the position of a student in the appropriate age cohort, based on their overall academic achievement in the HSC. The ATAR is reported as a number between 0 and 99.95, in increments of 0.05. A student's position (rank) depends on how the student has achieved in a course **and** how well other students have achieved in that course. A student's ATAR indicates the position of that student relative to a specific year cohort. For example, a student who receives an ATAR of 80.00 in 2010 has performed well enough in the HSC to place him/her 20% from the top of their Year 7 cohort, if all the Year 7 students had completed Year 12 and were eligible for an ATAR in 2010.

Students who indicate on their HSC entry forms that they wish to be notified of their ATAR will receive an ATAR Advice Notice from the UAC. ATARs are made available to higher education institutions for selection purposes.



What courses are recognised for calculation of an ATAR?

Courses recognised for the purpose of calculating an ATAR are those that have been developed and assessed by the NSW Board of Studies. They are courses deemed to have sufficient academic rigour to be regarded as suitable preparation for university study. ATAR courses are classified as either Category A or Category B courses. The criteria for **Category A** courses are academic rigour, depth of knowledge, the degree to which the course contributes to assumed knowledge for tertiary studies and the coherence with other courses included in the ATAR calculations. Category B courses are those whose level of cognitive and performance demands are not regarded as satisfactory in themselves, but their contribution is regarded as adequate if the other courses included in the aggregate are more academically demanding.

Eligibility for an ATAR

To be eligible for an ATAR a student must satisfactorily complete at least 10 units of ATAR courses, which must include at least:

- eight units from Category A courses
- two units of English
- three Board developed courses of two units or greater
- four subjects.

How is the ATAR calculated?

Calculation of the ATAR is the responsibility of the Technical Committee on Scaling on behalf of the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee. The NSW Board of Studies provides the HSC data from which the ATARs are calculated. ATAR scores are communicated to students and universities by the UAC. Because of confidentiality provisions specified in Government legislation, ATARs cannot be provided to the Board of Studies, to schools or to other agencies.

The ATAR is based on an aggregate of scaled marks in 10 units of ATAR courses comprising:

- the best two units of English
- the best eight units from the remaining units.

No more than two units of Category B courses can be included. Marks to be included in the ATAR calculations can be accumulated over a five-year period but if a course is repeated only the last satisfactory attempt is used in the calculation of the ATAR.



The scaling process is designed to encourage students to take the courses for which they are best suited and which best prepare them for their future studies. The underlying principle is that a student should neither be advantaged nor disadvantaged by choosing one HSC course over another. The scaling algorithm estimates what students' marks would have been if all courses had been studied by all students.

An explanation of the scaling process for 2010 is detailed in the Report on the Scaling of the 2010 NSW Higher School Certificate, produced by the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee - Technical Committee on Scaling: p.7 – 11.

<http://www.uac.edu.au/documents/atar/2010-ScalingReport.pdf>

The ATAR Advice Notice

The ATAR Advice Notice includes:

- the student's ATAR
- a list of the ATAR courses which the student studied and the categorisation of each course
- the number of units of each ATAR course that were actually included in the calculation of the ATAR.

While the ATAR is calculated for all ATAR-eligible students, only those students who indicate on their HSC entry forms that they wish to be notified of their ATAR will receive an ATAR Advice Notice from the UAC.

There are two circumstances where an ATAR will not be shown on the ATAR Advice Notice. The first is when a student receives an ATAR between 0.00 and 30.00, in which case the ATAR will be indicated as "30 or less". The second is when the student has not met the requirements for an ATAR, in which case the statement "Not Eligible" will appear.



An example of an ATAR Advice Notice is provided below:

2010 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank Advice				
Your Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR): 74.30				
*SEVEN*FOUR***THREE*ZERO				
Course Name	Category	Year completed	Unit Value	Units included in calculation of ATAR
Business Studies	A	2010	2	1
English Standard	A	2010	2	2
Mathematics	A	2010	2	2
Studies of Religion 1	A	2010	1	0
French Continuers	A	2010	2	2
French Extension	A	2010	1	1
Hospitality Examination	B	2010	2	2

(Source: Report on Scaling of the 2010 NSW Higher School Certificate, Universities Admission Centre, 2011)

Percentage of students receiving an ATAR in 2010

In 2010, a total of 70,138 students completed at least one HSC course. Of these, 1,602 did not complete any ATAR course, so were ineligible for an ATAR. Of the remaining 68,536 students 93.1% received an HSC and 79.1% received an ATAR. HSC students who did not receive an ATAR fell into two categories:

- Those studying less than 10 units
- Those who enrolled in a full HSC programme that did not satisfy the requirements for an ATAR.

(Source: Report on Scaling of the 2010 NSW Higher School Certificate, Universities Admission Centre, 2011)

What ATAR is required for undergraduate courses?

Each of the universities publishes an overview of the ATAR cut-off points needed (lowest rank required) for a particular course in a given year. Applicants are advised that they should only use this information as a guide to what might be required in future years.

As an example, this web-link takes you to the ATAR cut-off points for courses at The University of Sydney for 2011: http://sydney.edu.au/future_students/domestic_undergraduate/admissions/entry_requirements/2011_atar_cutoffs.shtml#ag



5 Application process

How do students select a course?

The UAC provides an online search tool for students to find information about undergraduate courses, most recent cut-off points and the application process. Students can also visit the websites of the individual institutions for information.

Apply to the UAC

Application to most NSW and ACT universities is by online application to the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC).

Applications close towards the end of September each year. Late applications can be submitted up to the end of February, but incur a late application fee. An applicant can change their preferences until early January. However, some courses select applicants on the basis of additional selection criteria (see below), such as a personal statement, questionnaire, portfolio, interview or test. These courses cannot usually be added after September and are listed as courses with early closing dates.

The following information is required in the application:

- personal details (name, address, email address, telephone number).
- Australian or overseas Year 12 qualification/s, including school name, name of qualification, year completed and any student numbers
- previous UAC application number, if applicable
- TAFE student number, name of qualification and years attended
- Australian or overseas tertiary qualification, including university student number, the qualification name and years attended.

Applicants may indicate up to **nine** preferences in one application. Each preference has a six digit code found online or in the universities section of the UAC Guide. Preferences are entered in the order in which the applicant wants them to be considered.

In the Main Round an applicant will be made **one offer** which will be the highest preference where they meet the ATAR. The ATAR cut-off points will be different each year, and are not known until after the offer rounds. The ATAR cut-off is the lowest student rank accepted into a university course. However, flexible entry or bonus points schemes (see below) at many universities allow students to enter a course with a lower ATAR if they meet other criteria.



Main round offers are made available on the UAC website. Applicants need their UAC application number and UAC PIN. A complete list of applicants who have been made an offer is also published in the Daily Telegraph and the Sydney Morning Herald. Finally, all applicants receive a letter from the UAC.

There are selection schemes for students with a lower ATAR, such as the Educational Access Schemes (EAS) and special consideration. Most NSW institutions that participate through the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) have an EAS for applicants who have experienced long-term educational disadvantage due to circumstances beyond their control or choosing, which has seriously affected their educational performance. A long-term educational disadvantage should normally be experienced for a period of at least six months.

Other admission criteria

Applicants for undergraduate courses are generally considered for admission on the basis of their ATAR. However, some courses have other criteria by which applicants are also considered. These include performance in the STAT, responses to a questionnaire, submission of a portfolio, or performance in an audition or interview. Applicants for courses which have additional selection criteria must still meet the normal requirements for admission, in terms of possessing recognised academic qualifications with competitive results.

For example, the University of Sydney lists all of the following additional admission criteria for admission to a wide range of undergraduate courses at the university – portfolio, personal statement, personal qualities assessment test, questionnaire, interview, audition and STAT.

Examples of additional admission criteria for a selection of undergraduate courses at the University of Sydney in 2011 are set out in the table below.

Code	Course	Additional admission criteria
511101	B Design in Architecture	Portfolio (optional)
511401	B Oral Health	Personal Qualities Assessment test and Interview
512301	B Visual Arts	Questionnaire, Interview and Portfolio
512100	B Veterinary Science	STAT (Multiple Choice), Personal Statement
512312	B Music (Performance)	Interview/Audition

Source: http://sydney.edu.au/future_students/domestic_undergraduate/admissions/entry_requirements/additional_selection_criteria.shtml



Bonus points for particular courses

Universities allocate bonus points in certain circumstances. Examples include students with strong performance in specified HSC subjects and students who live in or attend school in an area defined by the university. As the bonus points schemes for each university, and often for each course at the same university, are different, an applicant's selection rank can be different for each course listed in their course preferences. For most Year 12 applicants, their selection rank for each preference is their ATAR. However, if universities allocate bonus points, then their selection rank for a preference = ATAR + bonus points.

(see **Appendix 1** for an example of the calculation of bonus points)

Alternative pathways to university – special entry schemes

As universities determine their own admissions policy, they can determine special entry schemes to support their mission, for example, to encourage diversity. As an example, the University of Sydney has a range of pathways for people to enter the university. These include:

Flexible Entry: For some courses the ATAR is recognised as not being the most appropriate measure of a student's potential to succeed in the course. In this case the university looks beyond the ATAR score and may consider the applicant's Year 12 subjects or may ask the applicant to present a portfolio or attend for interview.

Broadway Scheme: This scheme is designed for applicants who have suffered long-term and serious educational disadvantage and where their performance in Year 11 and 12 has been seriously affected by circumstances outside the applicant's control.

Cadigal Scheme: This scheme provides access and a support programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.

Elite Athlete and Performers Scheme: This scheme is for applicants who can demonstrate that they are elite athletes or performers and have had training, competitive and/or performance commitments that have significantly affected their results.

Rural Entry Scheme: This is a scheme for applicants from rural areas whose ATAR is up to five points below the normal entry standard for their course of choice. This scheme is limited to three faculties.

Source: http://sydney.edu.au/future_students/domestic_undergraduate/admissions/special_entry_schemes/index.shtml



6 Allocation of places

Applicants for undergraduate courses must meet certain admission requirements before they are eligible to be considered for a place. For most courses applicants are selected on the basis of academic success. Year 12 applicants in 2011 are selected on the basis of their ATAR.

Some courses select applicants on the basis of additional selection criteria such as a personal statement, questionnaire, portfolio of work, interview or test. Other courses may use a combination of both academic qualifications and additional selection criteria.

The institutions decide the cut-off score for each course. The interaction of three factors influences cut-offs:

- the number of places available on the course
- the number of applicants for the course and
- the quality of those applicants.

The UAC does not have a role in the selection of students for courses. It coordinates the process and posts notification of offers on behalf of the institutions.

Most offers are made in the Main Round. Applicants can receive only one offer to a Commonwealth-supported place (CSP) in each offer round. That offer will be to the highest preference for which they are eligible. An applicant who has both CSP and Domestic fee-paying (DFEE) courses listed in their preferences, may receive more than one offer in a round – an offer of their highest CSP and an offer of their highest DFEE.

Accepting an offer

If an application is successful, the candidate will receive an offer letter from the UAC and will also receive information from the institution making the offer that explains acceptance and enrolment dates and procedures. Some institutions allow successful candidates to accept the offer online.

If an applicant does not receive an offer in the Main Round, they may receive an offer in a subsequent round. Applicants are advised to accept the Main Round offer as they may not be offered a place in a subsequent round and would therefore miss out on a course for that year. Accepting an offer does not stop an applicant from being considered in subsequent offer rounds unless the offer was their first preference.



		<p>How is the UAC system funded?</p> <p>The UAC is funded on the basis of a fee per application and a contribution by the universities per offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee per application for Year 12 students is \$26 (plus late fee, if applicable) • Fee per application for non-Year 12 students is \$56 (plus late fee, if applicable) • The fee per offer paid by the universities in 2010 was \$52.
7	<p>What if?</p>	<p>What if an applicant does not receive an offer?</p> <p>A letter will be sent from the UAC outlining why the application was unsuccessful. An unsuccessful applicant is advised to contact the admissions office at the institution and ask why they were not made an offer and what study options might be available to them. The institutions, not the UAC, decide who will receive offers.</p>
8	<p>Developments in higher education</p>	<p>Transforming Australia's Higher Education System</p> <p>This is the Australian Government's reform agenda for higher education and research that is designed to transform the scale, potential and quality of Australia's universities and open the door to higher education for a new generation of Australians. The four elements of the new regulatory and quality arrangements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the establishment in 2011 of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) • a new National Register of Higher Education Providers • a new Higher Education Standards Framework • the establishment of a new website, My University, by 2012. <p>http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransformingAustraliasHESystem.aspx</p>



Appendix 1. Example of calculation of bonus points

For example, Course X has five applicants and only three places available.

The five applicants have the following selection ranks (ATAR scores):

Applicant 1 99 (ATAR of 99)

Applicant 2 98 (ATAR of 97 plus 1 bonus point)

Applicant 3 97 (ATAR of 95 plus 2 bonus points)

Applicant 4 96 (ATAR of 96)

Applicant 5 95 (ATAR of 93 plus 2 bonus points)

Offers will be made to applicants 1, 2, and 3. Applicant 4 will not receive an offer even though that applicant has an ATAR higher than applicant 3. The cut-off for course X will be 97.

Sources and websites for further details:

Education in NSW

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) <http://www.aqf.edu.au/>

New South Wales Board of Studies <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/>

New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (DETNSW) <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/home/>

Technical and Further Education NSW <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/>

Higher education in NSW

Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres (ACTAC) <http://www.actac.edu.au/>

Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) www.acpet.edu.au

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) <http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/aqtf>

Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/teqsa/Pages/default.aspx>

Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) <http://www.uac.edu.au/>

Universities Quality Agency (UQA) <http://www.auqa.edu.au/>

Links to documents

The Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank in New South Wales – a technical report, June 2009 <http://www.uac.edu.au/documents/atar/ATAR-Technical-Report.pdf>

The Report on the Scaling of the 2010 NSW Higher School Certificate <http://www.uac.edu.au/documents/atar/2010-ScalingReport.pdf>

Transforming Australia's Higher Education System <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransformingAustraliasHESystem.aspx>



Country/State/ Territory	Quebec, Canada	
1	Summary	<p>In Quebec, students who wish to go to university generally complete a two-year pre-university college programme, at colleges set up for this purpose, called CEGEP. This case study looks at the transition from CEGEP to University. The general policy of universities is to accept all applicants who meet the general and specific admission requirements to a programme. When a selection has to be made, usually due to enrolment limits, each university decides if and to what extent a student's academic record should be used in the selection process. The use of academic records for the purpose of selection assumes that there is a common basis for evaluation of students and their learning experiences, and that the grading methods used in their respective CEGEP are inherently the same. CEGEP regulations ensure the autonomy of each college in the evaluation of learning. Consequently universities have devised a way of classifying students for selection by using statistical methods to correct for observed differences in the grading systems used by the colleges. This measure (the R score) adjusts results so as to take into account the relative strength of each group of students. There is no central applications system for university applications in Quebec.</p>
2	Country context	<p>Elementary and secondary schooling</p> <p>In Quebec schooling begins at age 6 and is mandatory up to the age of 16. Most children attend an optional year of full-time kindergarten. Elementary school consists of six years. This is followed by secondary school which offers five years of general education divided into two cycles. Cycle one lasts three years and aims to consolidate the learning that took place in elementary school. From Year three on (Cycle two), in addition to the general curriculum, students are introduced to optional subjects (sciences, arts etc.) to facilitate their thinking in relation to career options. At the end of the fifth year of secondary school students are awarded the Secondary School Diploma (SSD) that provides access to college, but does not lead directly to university.</p> <p>In Cycle two various vocational training programmes are offered leading to a trade. Some of these programmes start in Year three of secondary school and these studies lead to a skilled or semi-skilled trade and may lead to a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS). Students can progress to an Attestation of Vocational Specialization (AVS) if they so choose.</p>



	<p>Post-secondary education – College education</p> <p>College education is a unique feature of Quebec's education system. This is an intermediary level between compulsory elementary and secondary schooling and university education. There are about 50 public general and vocational colleges, known as CEGEPs, and about 25 private subsidised colleges. CEGEP is an acronym for <i>Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel</i>. All of these institutions offer a two-year pre-university programme and three-year technical programmes leading to a general or technical <i>Diploma d'études collégiales</i> (DEC) as well as shorter programmes leading to the Attestation of College Studies (ACS).</p> <p>The pre-university programme leads directly to university where the general DEC is required for admission. The technical programmes generally lead to the workplace but can, in certain circumstances, lead to university.</p> <p>University Education</p> <p>There are 15 French speaking universities and 3 English speaking universities in Quebec province. Universities are independent legal entities and enjoy a good deal of autonomy. University education is based on a similar model to most North American universities with the exception that bachelor's degrees are usually of three years duration (90 credits, with some exceptions) for Quebec students, which is a result of the 13 years of schooling completed in Quebec and the initial specialisation in CEGEP. Students attending Quebec universities from outside the province have to complete 30 credits, called the Extended Credit Program (ECP), in addition to the regular (90 or 120 credit) degree programme. Some programmes require students to take a specific first year programme.</p> <p>Students pay tuition fees to attend university. The <i>Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport</i> (MELS) operates a financial assistance programme to ensure that lack of funding is not an obstacle to higher education.</p>
<p>3 Organisations involved in process</p>	<p>Universities</p> <p>The admissions office/s in each of the universities is responsible for the applications process, decision making process and notifying applicants of the outcome. There is no central agency in Quebec that handles the application process.</p> <p>Conférence des Recteurs et Principaux des Universités du Québec (CREPUQ)</p> <p>CREPUQ is a private organization, founded in 1963, comprising all of Quebec's universities. CREPUQ acts as the representative for Quebec universities with the government on all matters concerning university life, including teaching and research, funding, harmonisation with colleges and government bills that affect universities. CREPUQ is funded mainly by membership fees.</p>



4 Key features

What is the R Score?

The R Score or the CRC (*Côte de rendement au collégial*), is used by admissions offices at Quebec universities to compare and rank CEGEP applicants for competitive courses. It is based on an assumption that a grade of 80 given by a teacher in one course is not the same as a grade of 80 given by another teacher in another course. The R score uses a statistical method to measure how far above or below the class average a student is, with adjustments based on the relative strength within the group.

The R Score is produced by the Ministry of Education for:

- each academic course a student has completed
- the last programmes the student was registered in, and
- overall for all the courses completed at CEGEP.

The R score was adopted by Quebec universities in 1995.

How is the R score calculated?

The R-score is a statistical measure of a student's performance which takes into account both:

- (i) the student's performance (rank) within the group within which s/he took the exam/s (z score)
- (ii) the relative strength of the student's group performance (as measured by distribution of results within the class).

Notes:

- (a) R-scores are given for a wide range of courses and are combined using a weighted average
- (b) The purpose of (ii) above is to partially offset the advantage of a strong student in a weak group over a similar student in a strong group
- (c) Students cannot calculate their R-score but can request it from the admitting institution.

See **Appendix 1** for details of how it is calculated.

Who calculates the R Score?

The R score is calculated by the Ministry for Education (MELS), using the SOCRATE programme, and it is accessed by the admissions offices of the individual universities. The R score is updated in February, June and September to include results for courses taken in the two semesters. A student would not be able to calculate their own R score because that would not have access to all the relevant information.



When is the R Score not calculated?

The R score is not calculated in the following circumstances:

- when there are fewer than six students in a course
- groups in which fewer than six students have a grade of at least 50
- for high-school make up courses.

How is the R score used in the university admissions process?

Quebec universities have all agreed to use the R score as the instrument of choice in evaluating an application for admission to a university programme. However, it is mainly used in the selection for admission to programmes of limited enrolment. Universities publish on their websites the R score cut-off points for all programmes for the previous year's enrolment. The R score alone can be used for selection to competitive entry programmes or it can be used in combination with other criteria, such as, taking a particular exam, sitting an entrance test, attending for interview or submitting a portfolio.

For the purpose of selecting candidates universities use the average R score of the last DEC programme in which the candidate was registered, with the condition that at least 16 courses contribute to its calculation. The R score of courses that are considered to be relevant prerequisites for admission to certain university programmes are integrated into the average R score calculation, when necessary. Since all university programme do not all have the same prerequisite courses, it is possible that the value of the average R score used in the analysis of a candidate's record may vary depending on the university programme applied to.



5 Application process

How do students select a programme?

College students who wish to continue their studies at university can access information about the range of programmes available by visiting the individual university websites. There is no central portal with all of this information but there is a link from the CREPUQ <http://www.crepuq.qc.ca/?lang=en> to each Quebec university. The websites detail the programmes, the educational and language requirements, if applicable, the application process, details of any supporting documentation required, the deadlines and the application fee. In addition, the universities produce undergraduate guides covering programmes and admissions and most universities organise a programme of admissions information sessions for potential applicants.

Making an application

The application process is unique to each university but generally speaking the process is as follows:

- The applicant chooses a suitable programme/s
- The applicant should ensure that he/she meets the admission requirements
- Apply online – the type of information required includes:
 - › biographical details
 - › contact information
 - › programme selection
 - › academic history
 - › current courses if applicant is still in CEGEP
 - › supporting documentation, as requested (personal statements, resumé, references etc.)
- Send documents (upload or send by mail or fax)
 - › identification documents
 - › transcripts – the CEGEP transcript is transferred electronically from the MELS.

What is the application fee?

The application fee is non-refundable and varies from one university to the next. An applicant can expect to pay in the region of \$60 CAN and \$100 CAN to each university.

What happens after the application is submitted?

The application will be reviewed by an Admissions Officer and applicants will be notified of missing documentation. Applicants can usually access their application status online.



6	Entry requirements	Two examples from two universities setting out the requirements for a selection of programmes:	
		<p>Example 1: Entry requirements for CEGEP students to Concordia University, Montreal</p>	<p>Example 2: Entry requirements for CEGEP students to McGill University, Montreal</p>
		<p>All programmes: All programmes require completion of a two-year pre university programme or a three-year professional DEC</p> <p>Additional requirements for selected programmes: <i>BA Early Childhood and Elementary Education 2011-2012</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific CEGEP courses are required beyond the DEC • Interview • Programme specific application • Reference/assessment forms • R Score (admission cut-off 2011) 24.00 <p><i>BSc Actuarial Mathematics (hons.) 2011-2012</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific CEGEP mathematics courses/Natural Science DEC/DEC intégré en sciences, letters et arts • Interview • R Score (admission cut-off in 2011) 30.00 	<p>All programmes: Students are eligible to apply to McGill University if they have obtained a pre-university DEC or a DEC in Sciences, letters et arts or a DEC in <i>Computer Science and Mathematics</i> or a three-year technical DEC.</p> <p>Additional requirements for selected programmes: <i>BSc (Food Science) 2011-2012</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEC in an appropriate Science programme and the following courses: Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics • R Score admission standards 2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math/Science 24.00 • Overall R Score 24.00 <p><i>B.C.L. or LL.B 2011-2012</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEC • Ability to function in a bilingual environment (French and English) • LSAT (Law School Admission test) • Supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal statement (2 pages) • Résumé (academic background and achievements; work experience; volunteer and community work; extra-curricular activities, sports, hobbies and other significant interests) • 2 letters of reference (academic and professional) • R Score (lowest score interviewed in 2011) 30.00 • R Score (average score interviewed in 2011) 33.50



7	Allocation, decision making process	<p>Review of applications</p> <p>Each university has its own process for making decisions about which applicants will be offered a place. In some universities certain faculties have their own admissions office. For example, at McGill University there are separate admissions offices for the faculties of Dentistry, Law, Medicine and Music.</p> <p>As a general rule an applicant will be offered a place if they meet the admission requirements. Where there are more applicants than there are places available universities will review applications competitively. Universities receive from the MELS an R score for each academic course a student has completed and overall R score for all the courses completed in CEGEP. The overall R score as well as the core average of any prerequisite courses will be used for competitive programmes. The courses used in calculating the core average differ depending on the programme that has been applied for. For example an engineering core average might include mathematics, chemistry and physics. A management core average will include certain mathematics courses.</p> <p>Generally speaking, extracurricular activities are not significant in the admission decision, although they are an important factor in awarding certain entrance scholarships.</p> <p>Applications that do not meet the R score requirement for competitive programs are reviewed holistically to determine if any extenuating circumstances might have adversely affected an otherwise acceptable record.</p>
8	Making the offers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An offer will generally be sent by email and by post from the Admissions Office/Assistant Dean's office to the successful applicant • An applicant could be granted conditional admission to a programme based on their records of study to date. Final admission would be based on the successful completion of the final term or semester and satisfying the academic admission requirements • Applicants who are offered admission will be given a time within which to respond. Candidates who wish to secure their offer must pay a non-refundable deposit • If no reply is received upon expiry of that date the offer of admission may be cancelled • Applicants could be waitlisted if their application was considered admissible but there are no available places at the time • Applicants who are refused will be informed of the decision by email.



9

Admission reconsideration

Although the process differs from one institution to another in general an applicant who has not been successful in their application for a place can make a written request to have the decision reconsidered. The written request would generally include information in support of reconsideration; such as, a description of significant change in the applicant's circumstances since the initial application review, correction of any missing or erroneous information in the application, or information that the applicant believes may have been overlooked when the original decision was made. A fee usually accompanies the reconsideration letter.

Appendix 1. The R Score

The R score contains two pieces of information for each course taken by a student: an indicator of the student's rank in the group based on that student's grade (the Z score), and an indicator of the relative strength of that group (ISG). The Z score allows for the initial differences between groups in addition to the advantages of the Z score.

The R score is a z-score to which an indicator of group strength (ISG) has been added.

$$R \text{ score} = (Z \text{ score} + ISG + C) \times D$$

An R score is given for every college course, except high-school level upgrading courses, and courses in which fewer than 6 students are registered. The final, computed R score is the result of the weighted averaging of all the R scores from the individual courses. Since 1999 an additional score of 0.5 is added to the overall R score for a student graduating with an International Baccalaureate degree or a DEC en Sciences, Lettres et Arts.

What are the components of the R score?

The **Z score** gives an indication of the grade of the student with respect to the grades of other students in the class.

Z score calculation: $(\text{Student's average grade for a course} - \text{Group's course average}) / \text{standard deviation}$.

The **ISG** is the Indicator of Strength of the Group. It serves to indicate the relative strength of the student group that a student was part of during their course. This group strength is determined using the weighted grade results of all of the courses taken in Secondary IV and V for all of the group's students. The ISG was implemented primarily to offset the advantage enjoyed by high-performing students in weak class groups over equally high-performing students in strong class groups. The inclusion of the ISG in the determination of the R score is to allow for a more equitable comparison between students, regardless of their CEGEP academic rank.

$$ISG = (\text{Average grade results of Secondary IV and V of all the group's students} - 75) \div 14$$

The use of a **constant C** (C=5) greatly reduces the possibility of a negative value in the score.



The final operation, in multiplying the sum of all the preceding values by the **D constant** ($D=5$), positions them over a fixed amplitude scale. The average R score is usually in the mid-20s, and there is no maximum or minimum R score since the Z score function (used to calculate the R score) is inverse proportional, meaning when the Standard Deviation tends towards 0, the R score will tend towards positive or negative infinity depending on whether the student's average is higher or lower than the group's average.

In addition, failed courses are given a reduced weight in the overall R-score; they are weighted at 25% of the credits in the first semester and subsequently at 50%. This correction has been in effect since October 2004.

Sources and websites for further details

Educational bodies

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)

http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/GR-PUB/m_englis.htm

Conférence des Recteurs et Principaux des Universités du Québec (CREPUQ) <http://www.crepuq.qc.ca/?lang=en>

Documents consulted

Conférence des Recteurs et Principaux des Universités du Québec, 2000 and 2009, The R score; what it is, and what it does http://www.crepuq.qc.ca/IMG/pdf/R_Score_short-2.pdf

Conférence des Recteurs et Principaux des Universités du Québec, 2000 and 2009, The R score: a survey of its purpose and use http://www.crepuq.qc.ca/IMG/pdf/R_Score_short-2.pdf

Conférence des Recteurs et Principaux des Universités du Québec, 2008, Questions and answers on the college R score <http://sujac.com/documents/r-score-faqs.pdf>

University websites

Concordia University <http://www.concordia.ca/admissions/>

McGill University <http://www.mcgill.ca/applying/undergrad2011-12/>



Country/State/ Territory	Texas, United States of America																
1	Summary	<p>A unique feature of the Texas higher education system is the Top 10% law. Students who have their high school diploma and rank in the top 10% of their high school class are automatically admitted to a public college or university of their choosing. Beyond this law, public community and technical colleges are "open admissions" institutions, generally requiring that a student has a high school diploma or its equivalent. Public universities set their own admissions requirements. Applicants must have a high school diploma or its equivalent and most universities require applicants to take the either the SAT or ACT admissions test. Some universities require other information for a more holistic decision making processes. Application to higher education is centralised for most institutions via 'ApplyTexas' or The Common Application. All students (except those who score highly in certain tests) must take the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) test before enrolling in a public college or university – this is a test of reading, writing and mathematics skills needed for success in college (a measure of 'college readiness'). Upon admission students who need to improve their skills will receive the appropriate support at the college or university.</p>															
2	Country context	<p>Education system prior to Higher Education</p> <p>The Texas public school system consists of 1,237 school districts and charters, 8,435 campuses, and over 4.8 million students. Students are primarily Hispanic (49%) and White (33%). More than half are economically disadvantaged and 17% have limited proficiency in English. The structure of public schooling in Texas is as follows: Kindergarten, Elementary school (years 1-5); Middle school (years 6-8) and High School (years 9-12). Public schooling is managed by the Texas Education Agency and the State Board of Education. For the High School class of 2010, 84.3% of the cohort of students who started Grade 9 together successfully graduated high school while a further 7.2% continued on in school, see Table 1.</p> <p>High School Graduation, Class 2010</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="539 1682 1370 1888"> <thead> <tr> <th>Graduated</th> <th>Continued (continued in High School beyond their Grade 9 cohort)</th> <th>Dropped out</th> <th>Received GED (General Education Development)</th> <th>Total %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>264,632</td> <td>22,532</td> <td>22,988</td> <td>3,927</td> <td>314,079</td> </tr> <tr> <td>84.3%</td> <td>7.2%</td> <td>7.3%</td> <td>1.3%</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Table 1: Grade 9 Longitudinal Graduation, Completion, and Dropout Rates, Texas Public Schools, Class of 2010</p>	Graduated	Continued (continued in High School beyond their Grade 9 cohort)	Dropped out	Received GED (General Education Development)	Total %	264,632	22,532	22,988	3,927	314,079	84.3%	7.2%	7.3%	1.3%	100%
Graduated	Continued (continued in High School beyond their Grade 9 cohort)	Dropped out	Received GED (General Education Development)	Total %													
264,632	22,532	22,988	3,927	314,079													
84.3%	7.2%	7.3%	1.3%	100%													



	<p>http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/completion/2010/state.html</p> <p>TEKS/TAKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills/Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills)</p> <p>TEKS represents the knowledge and skills students should gain in school each year. Students are expected to learn TEKS from kindergarten through to high school. TAKS are the tests to determine if a student has the necessary skills for their grade level and the exit-level TAKS test determines if a student has the skills and knowledge needed to graduate from public high school.</p> <p>Higher Education</p> <p>The public Texas higher education system is coordinated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The responsibilities of the Board include assessment of the state of higher education (vocational, technical and academic); advising the governor, the legislature and institutions on improving higher education and establishing policies for the efficient use of the state's higher education resources.</p> <p>The Texas education plan for higher education, Closing the Gaps by 2015, was adopted in 2000 to focus the state's efforts on four goals: to close the gaps in participation, success, excellence and research in higher education. Targets were revised in 2005. However, there have been many successes to date. Since 2000, enrolment in Texas higher education has increased by 39.4 percent. Enrollment totalled over 1.5 million students in 2009.</p>
<p>3 Organisations involved in process</p>	<p>Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)</p> <p>The THECB is an agency of the Texas state government that oversees all public post-secondary education in Texas. The board determines which Texas public four-year universities are permitted to start or continue to offer degree programs. However, operations of the various universities or systems are the responsibility of each university or system board of regents. In 2000, the THECB published a higher-education plan for the state, called Closing the Gaps by 2015. The plan's stated goal is closing education gaps within Texas, as well as between Texas and other U.S. states. The THECB has an information website, College for All Texans http://www.collegefortexans.com/ providing information on college courses, admission tests and the applications process.</p>



ApplyTexas

ApplyTexas was created through a collaborative effort between the THECB and the colleges and universities represented on the site. ApplyTexas offers a centralised means for both Texas and non-Texas students to apply to the many post-secondary institutions in Texas. Applicants complete their application – online or paper versions – and attach admissions essays, where required. ApplyTexas will send the applications to the institutions nominated by the applicant. A fee is paid to each institution. The ApplyTexas site allows students to search for general and university specific information about scholarships, fees and accommodation.

The Common Application

The Common Application is a U.S. member based organisation that provides a form – online and in print – that applicants can submit to any of the 463 member colleges and universities across the U.S. The criterion for membership of the Common Application is that institutions must use a holistic selection process. The holistic process includes subjective as well as objective criteria, including at least one recommendation form, at least one un-timed essay, and broader campus diversity considerations.

The College Board

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association in the United States that was formed in 1900 as the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB). Its membership includes more than 5,900 schools, colleges, universities and other educational organisations. It runs standardised tests for which it charges a fee, including the SAT Reasoning Test, PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) and the Advanced Placement Program. These tests are designed to measure a student's ability. The College Board is headquartered in the New York City.

ACT Inc.

The American College Testing Programme Inc., now known as ACT (pronounced A-C-T) is a standardised test for high school achievement and college admissions in the United States. It was first administered in 1959 as a competitor to the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test, now the SAT Reasoning Test.

Higher Education Institutions

There are 146 public and independent institutions of higher education in Texas, including public community colleges, public four-year universities, the Texas State Technical College System, health related institutions and a number of independent colleges, universities and junior colleges.



4 Automatic Admission

Top 10% Law

The Uniform Admission statute, referred to as the Top 10% law, (Texas Education Code 51.802) was enacted in 1997. <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm#51.802> It requires that high school students in the top 10% of their graduating classes be given automatic admission to Texas public general academic teaching institutions (universities) in one of the first two years after their graduation, provided that the applicant has:

- successfully completed the requirements for the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) or the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) (see below) or the equivalent if enrolled in a private school

or

- satisfied the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks on the ACT college entrance exam or earned a score of at least 1,500 out of 2,400 on the SAT college entrance exam.

The intention of this statute is to promote ethnic and geographic diversity at Texas colleges and universities by establishing an admissions policy that offers admission to high achieving students from a wide range of high schools from all regions of the state. Students who meet the criteria for automatic admission must submit an application before the deadline set by the college or university to which they are applying. In addition, the applicant must apply for admission to a state college or university within the first two school years after graduating from high school.

This statute impacts most on selective state universities. In 2009 and 2010, for example, 80% of Texas-resident entrants at the University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) were admitted under the Top 10% law, compared to 25% of total entrants to all public universities. UT-Austin was admitting a disproportionate number of its entrants under the 10% rule (due to its popularity as a destination for students). A statute was passed in 2009 that permits UT-Austin to admit its own estimate of top students so that they comprise 75% of its entering class (of Texas-residents). These students are admitted by rank order (according to their high school scores). UT-Austin may use this provision until 2016.



5 Tests for college admission

What are the entry requirements for college/university?

The basic requirement for college entry in Texas is that an applicant has graduated high school. The State of Texas developed the **Recommended High School Programme (RHSP)** as a guide for students planning to attend college. This is also referred to as the college preparatory programme. By taking the courses in the RHSP a high school graduate will meet the requirements for admission to Texas colleges and universities. The RHSP is currently the "default curriculum" in Texas high schools.

The **Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP)** goes beyond the RHSP. It requires advanced schoolwork that reflects college-level or professional-level skills. Many schools and districts have agreements with nearby colleges and universities that allow high school students to enrol in courses to earn both high school and college credits.

Some schools also offer **Advanced Placement (AP)** courses. These are college-level courses where a student can earn college credits and advanced standing in colleges and universities.

Tech-Prep Articulated Programs are designed to fulfil the requirements of associate's degree programmes at Texas State Technical Colleges. Thereafter, a student can either enter the workforce or transition from a technical degree to university to complete their bachelor's degree.

Tests during High School:

In Texas there are a number of tests that are used to determine if an applicant is ready to graduate high school and to advance to college or university.

(i) TEKS/TAKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills/Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills)

See above.

(ii) AP Exams (Advanced Placement Program)

College level Advanced Placement courses enable high school students to earn credits or advanced standing when they progress to Texas colleges and universities. AP courses and exams are administered by The College Board and there are 34 courses to choose from. The fee for each exam is \$87.

(iii) PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)

This is a multiple choice test administered by The College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation. PSAT scores determine eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Program.



(iv) GED (General Education Development)

The GED tests give students the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma where a student has not completed a high school diploma. The GED offers a credential that is recognised for advancement to employment opportunities and further education.

College Admission Tests

The two widely accepted and recognised college admission tests are the SAT and the ACT.

(i) SAT

The SAT Reasoning Test (known as the SAT), operated by The College Board, is the most widely used college admission test in the United States. A total of 141,733 Texas public school and non-public school high school graduates in the class of 2009 took the test. This figure represents a state participation rate of 51 percent. The SAT tests students' knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics in addition to how they think, solve problems and communicate. The test consists of three sections: critical reading, mathematics and writing. Scores for the sections range from 200 to 800. The cost for the test is \$45 US per candidate. In addition to the fee for the test, the fee for sending SAT grades to institutions is \$9.50 US per college (3-5 weeks delivery) and an additional fee of \$26.50 US for 2-day delivery.

(ii) ACT

The ACT measures general educational development in four curriculum-based areas: English, mathematics, reading and science. The four tests are measures of academic development that rely largely on students' ability to apply content knowledge and reasoning skill acquired in their coursework to high-level tasks. Scores for each section range from 1 to 36. Examinees also receive a composite score, calculated as the average of the four sections. There is also an optional writing section that requires examinees to write an essay. The cost for the ACT is \$34 US per test without the writing test and \$49 US including the writing test. This fee includes sending the scores to four college choices. The fifth and sixth college choices cost an additional \$10 US each.

Taking the test:

A student can choose to take the SAT and ACT tests as many times as he/she wishes. Test fee waivers are available from The College Board and ACT, Inc., to junior and senior high school students based on economic need and eligibility criteria apply.



	<p>The Texas Education Agency (TEA) in a scheme called the Texas College Preparation Program – Grade 11 College Entrance Exams, contracted The College Board and ACT Inc., to offer one free SAT or ACT examination in the spring or summer of 2011 to high school 11th grade students enrolled in Texas public schools. The results for juniors who availed of this free test will not be available until 2012 college admissions report. This initiative is part of the State's plans for improving participation in higher education (Closing the Gap by 2015).</p> <p>CLEP (College Level Examination Program)</p> <p>The CLEP gives examinees a chance to gain college credit for what they already know by earning qualifying scores on any of 33 examinations. Credits can be earned for knowledge acquired through independent study, prior coursework, on-the-job training, professional development, cultural pursuits or internships. A satisfactory score on a CLEP exam could gain a student from 3 to 12 credits. Each CLEP exam costs \$77 US.</p> <p>Mandatory testing for all entrants to higher education</p> <p>Texas Success Initiative (TSI)</p> <p>Under the TSI, undergraduate students enrolling for the first time in public institutions of higher education are required to take an assessment to evaluate their readiness for freshman-level academic coursework (college readiness).</p> <p>For further details see below.</p>
<p>6 Requirements for college admission</p>	<p>How do students in Texas select a course?</p> <p>Texas students who wish to go to a two-year college or a four-year university will find information about an individual institutions admission requirements, deadlines, application fees, college fees, scholarships and application procedures on the college or universities website. Links to the member colleges and university are available from the ApplyTexas and The Common Application sites. Students are advised to visit the colleges and many of the colleges and universities host tours in the final year of high school.</p> <p>What are the criteria for admission?</p> <p>In Texas each institution of higher education establishes its own criteria for admission. Texas public community colleges and state technical colleges are "open admissions" institutions requiring for most areas of study that the applicant has received a high school diploma or its equivalent. These colleges offer certificate and two-year degree programmes. Many students go to community college before transferring to a university.</p>



Beyond the requirement that they admit all students who rank in the top 10% of the high school class, each university sets its own admission requirements. All Texas universities require their students to have a high school diploma or its equivalent and some require or recommend certain high school courses. In addition, most universities require applicants to take either the SAT or ACT test. The majority of universities take into account some combination of college admissions test scores and school achievement records. However, some institutions favour a combination of test results and a holistic review process. Details of the requirements are set out in the individual institutions' website and publications. Here is an example of the requirements for Freshman/First Year entry to Texas A&M University Corpus Christie: <https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/desthtml/tamcc.html>

Example 1: Admission requirements for Freshman (1st Year) Admission to Texas A&M University Corpus Christie

REGULAR FRESHMAN ADMISSION

Applications are reviewed to ensure that applicants present the basic academic preparation required to pursue study at Texas A&M University Corpus Christie. Students who complete the RHSP, the DAP, or the Texas Scholars Program fulfil the academic preparation requirement.

English	4 Credits
Laboratory Science	3 Credits, at least 1 of which must be in Biology, Chemistry, or Physics
Mathematics	3 Credits at the level of Algebra I or higher, which may include Plane Geometry
Social Studies	3 Credits
Foreign Language	2 Credits in one foreign language or American Sign Language.

Students who have graduated in the top 10% of their high school classes are admitted without minimum SAT or ACT score requirements. Such students, however, must have their official test results on either the SAT or ACT submitted to the Office of Admissions and Records.



The following requirements linking high school class standing and minimum SAT or ACT scores will apply:

Class Standing	Required SAT Score	ACT Composite
Top 10%	No minimum	No minimum
Next 15%	900 or above	19
2nd Quarter	1,000 or above	21
3rd Quarter	1,100 or above	23
4th Quarter	1,200 or above	27

Applicants applying to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi are required to pay an application fee of \$40 US (fee increased from \$25 US on 1 September 2011).

7 Application process

How do students apply?

Two agencies provide centralised procedures for college and university applications:

ApplyTexas provides a centralised means for both Texas and non-Texas students to apply to post-secondary institutions in Texas. Students can use the ApplyTexas site to search for and view general and university information. ApplyTexas enables students to apply to one or more Texas public universities and participating community and private colleges. It also enables applicants to submit application essays online and to apply for scholarships and housing from participating universities.

The Common Application is a US member based organisation that provides an admission application – online or in print – to students who wish to apply to any of their 463 member colleges and universities, including many in Texas. Once completed, online or print version, copies of the Undergraduate Admission can be sent to any number of participating colleges. Membership is limited to colleges and universities that evaluate students using a holistic selection process. A holistic process includes subjective as well as objective criteria, including at least one recommendation form, at least one untimed essay, and broader campus diversity considerations.



The two examples below illustrate the application requirements for two universities. Example 2 used a combination of test scores and holistic criteria.

Example 1: Freshman application academic requirements for Texas A&M University for year 2011–2012

(Texas A&M University is a public research-intensive university with 38,000-plus undergraduates and more than 9,000 graduate students studying in over 250 degree programs in 10 colleges.)

1. A completed ApplyTexas Application
2. Essay Topics A and B on the ApplyTexas Application are required for all applicants
3. An official high school transcript with a numerical class rank and the high school curriculum noted (recommended or advanced/distinguished)
4. SAT or ACT Scores, including writing score.

A non-refundable \$60 processing fee or fee waiver

Example 2: Freshman student application to University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin)(2011–2012)

(UT-Austin is a public research university based in Austin, Texas. For Fall 2010, the university enrolled 38,420 undergraduate and 11,582 graduate students.)

Freshman applicants are required to submit all of the following materials by the appropriate deadline:

1. Completed ApplyTexas application form (online submission preferred)
2. Two essays, submitted with ApplyTexas form
3. Official high school transcript
4. Evidence of meeting the State of Texas high school coursework requirements
5. Official SAT Reasoning or ACT (to include a writing test) scores, sent directly from the testing agency
6. Additional programme specific requirements for certain majors
7. Recommended and optional items: résumé, letters of recommendation, special circumstances supporting information.

A non-refundable application processing fee \$75 US (reduced to \$60 US for Spring 2012).



	<p>What information is included on the application form?</p> <p>Application forms, which can be downloaded from ApplyTexas or The Common Application, depending on which college or university the applicant wishes to apply to, can be completed and submitted online (preferred) or in hard copy. The range of information required on the application form includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. biographical information 2. family details 3. educational background 4. test scores 5. school disciplinary records 6. residency information 7. extracurricular activities 8. personal and volunteer activities including awards received 9. employment, internships and summer activities 10. customised questions for an institution 11. essays are required for some institutions which can be attached to the application file 12. teacher/school counsellor reports. <p>The application is submitted with the appropriate fee for each college or university the applicant wishes to apply to. Fees vary from zero to \$60 US. Most institutions charge a fee of about \$25 US. A fee waiver scheme is available for qualifying applicants who must submit documented proof to the institution to support the claim for a fee waiver.</p>
<p>8 Allocation, decision making process</p>	<p>In Texas higher education institutions establish their own criteria for admission. However, when it comes to making decisions about the allocation of places the first consideration will be the Top 10% law.</p> <p>Admission to a two-year college</p> <p>Most public community colleges maintain an "open admissions" policy where any applicant with a high school diploma or equivalent may be accepted. Other institutions guarantee admission to students who graduate from Texas high schools in the top percentages of their classes, for example student who achieves a grade point average in the top 25% of their high school class.</p>



Admission to a public four-year university

Most universities use a combination of college admissions test scores (SAT or ACT) and high school ranking and the requirement that the applicant has the college preparation courses in the allocation of places. The SAT and ACT standards can vary according to the admissions policy of each institution. Some institutions allow high school records and scores to compensate for each other, for example, a higher class rank may compensate for a lower SAT or ACT score (Example 1: Texas A&M University Corpus Christie below). Other universities undertake a holistic review of applications where college preparation courses, college admission tests scores and a review of school and personal achievement records is included in the admissions review process (Example 2: University of Texas at Austin).

Regular Freshman (1st Year) Admission and Alternative Freshman Admission Processes

Example 1: Texas A&M University Corpus Christie

Texas A&M University Corpus Christie has a two-step admissions review process and depends on what they regard to be best predictors of academic success, namely a combination of high school class rank and standardised test scores. A student's high school class rank results from ongoing opportunities to demonstrate capabilities in familiar situations, whereas standardised tests use objective measures for gauging academic potential. Regular Freshman Admission is based upon the combination of these two measures. Where an applicant does not meet the Regular Freshman Admission requirements they may be considered under the Alternative Admission Procedure. In this scenario the Undergraduate Admissions Committee reviews the applications. In addition to reviewing the student's class rank, standardised test scores, and high school courses, the committee will consider other factors such as participation in extra-curricular activities, including evidence of leadership; community service; talents and awards; extenuating circumstances; and employment, internships, and summer activities.

Applicants for Alternative Admission must have an official SAT or ACT score on file with the University. The applications considered under the Alternative Admission Procedure will be on a case-by-case basis. Students admitted under Alternative Admission may be subject to specific enrollment conditions established by the Undergraduate Admissions Committee based on the applicant's individual circumstances. These conditions may include enrolling in prescribed developmental course work, participating in tutoring sessions and other academic support activities, and meeting other conditions designed to promote academic success.

Source: http://admissions.tamucc.edu/freshman/app_eval.html



Holistic Review Process

Example 2: Holistic Review The University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin)

Source: <http://bealonghorn.utexas.edu/freshmen/after-you-apply/automatic-admission>

The UT-Austin admissions procedure for students not automatically admitted under the 10% Law is broader than class rank and test results. Since 1997, for those not automatically admitted, factors considered include:

The **Academic Index (AI)**. This equation, calculated using the high school results and the ACT/SAT score, produces a predicted freshman year grade point average.

The Personal Achievement Index (PAI) includes scores on two written essays (Essay A and Essay B), an activities résumé which should indicate long-term commitment to and leadership in extra-curricular activities, school/community service and work and employment experiences, details of talents and awards achieved and letters of recommendation regarding personal and academic achievements. Information about **Special circumstances** in an applicant's life can help an application reviewer to get a clearer picture of the applicant's circumstances (socio-economic status of family; single parent home; language spoken at home; family responsibilities; overcoming adversity; cultural background; race and ethnicity or other information). Special circumstances can be submitted in an optional Essay C or detailed in a letter. An applicant also has the option to have a third party (doctor or a counsellor) submit a letter on their behalf rather than make a submission themselves.

The AI and PI of applicants are determined by admissions officers and the scores plotted on an admission decision grid. Admissions liaisons, and/or representatives of Deans' offices or faculty, then make decisions as to which applicants to admit. Texas resident applicants are either admitted, "cascaded" to their second choice of major, offered Summer Freshman Admission if spaces are available, or offered the Coordinated Admission Program (CAP) at a UT System component school. Thus, Texas residents submitting a completed entering freshman application by the published deadline are not permanently denied admission to UT Austin. Non-residents are either admitted or denied.

Source: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/admissions/research/HB588-Report13.pdf>



9	Prior to enrolment	<p>Texas Success Initiative (TSI)</p> <p>The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) is a state-legislated programme that requires students to be assessed in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics prior to enrolling at a Texas public higher education institution. The results of the TSI assessment are used to determine the students' placement in certain courses and overall readiness to enrol in college-level coursework. Exemption from this test is only possible if the student has achieved certain prescribed scores in the TAKS or the ACT/SAT test or is enrolled in a certificate program of 42 or fewer semester credit hours in a public community college or technical college.</p> <p>If a student is not exempt or does not qualify for a waiver, they will be required to take one of four tests approved by the THECB. Although at least one of the assessments must be taken prior to enrolment, the results cannot be used as a condition of admission to an institution, but rather a condition of enrolment.</p> <p>If a student fails to meet the TSI standards, the college or university in which he or she is enrolling is responsible for developing a personalised plan to prepare the student for freshman-level coursework. The plan for academic success must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) be designed on an individual basis to provide the best opportunity for each student to succeed in performing freshman-level academic coursework (2) provide to the student a description of the appropriate developmental education considered necessary to ensure the readiness of that student to perform freshman-level academic coursework (3) provide the student with an appropriate measure for determining readiness to perform freshman-level academic coursework.
10	What if?	<p>What happens if a student is not offered a place at the university of the choice?</p> <p>If an applicant is not successful in their application to a college or university they can:</p> <p>Appeal the decision - Submit an appeal to the Admissions Office at the college or university. This would normally include a letter of appeal and other supporting materials such as updated scores or transcripts, a résumé detailing personal achievements, a personal statement and/or letters of recommendation. An interview or personal presentation is not usually involved in the appeals process.</p> <p>Re-apply for a future semester- Apply as a freshman again for a future semester. New information (test scores, updated résumé etc.) would need to be added to the application, as decisions are typically consistent from one application cycle to the next.</p> <p>Attend another institution now and transfer later - Attend another institution (college or university) for now and apply for transfer admission later.</p>



11 Ongoing Developments

Closing the Gaps by 2015 – Texas higher education plan

Closing the Gaps by 2015 was adopted in October 2000 by the THECB with strong support from the state's educational, business and political communities. The plan is directed at closing educational gaps in Texas as well as between Texas and other states. Closing the Gaps set specific state-wide goals for increasing participation in higher education, increasing success (i.e. certificates, undergraduate degrees, and other identifiable student successes from high quality programs), increasing the number of nationally recognised programs or services at colleges and universities in Texas, and increasing the level of federal science and engineering research and development obligations to Texas. Many of the developments in higher education in Texas over the past ten years have been informed by this plan and there is an Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015. <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/2005.PDF?CFID=20403413&FTOKEN=73744162>

Here are two examples of ongoing developments under the auspices of Closing the Gaps by 2015:

Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS)

The Texas CCRS which were adopted by the THECB and the Commissioner of Education in 2008, articulate a baseline of knowledge necessary for students to seamlessly transition from high school to college or to the modern skilled workplace. The CCRS will be used to determine college readiness on the End of Course (EOC) assessments in Algebra 11 and English 111 and will, it is hoped, reduce the need for remedial education when students enter college, ultimately increasing the number of Texas students graduating from college. The CCRS are now in the process of being incorporated into the TEKS curriculum for public education. Ninth graders entering high school in 2011-2012 will be the first to be assessed under the new EOC assessments as a requirement for graduation. Most of those students would be entering Texas public institutions of higher education in the fall 2015. <http://www.txccrs.org/about/about-ccr.htm>

P-16 Initiative

"P-16" describes an integrated system of education stretching from preschool (the "P") through a four-year college degree ("grade 16"). It is designed to improve student achievement by getting children off to a good start, raising academic standards, conducting appropriate assessments, improving teacher quality and generally smoothing student transitions from one level of learning to the next. It also focuses on helping all children meet the proficiency levels needed to succeed at the next education level and in the workforce. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4693&menu_id=814



Sources and websites for further details

Education in Texas

Texas Education Code <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/?link=ED>

Texas Education Agency (TEA) <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/>

State Board of Education (SBOE) <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=1156>

Higher education in Texas

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/>

The College Board (SAT Test) <http://about.collegeboard.org/>

ACT Inc. <http://www.act.org/>

ACT – Services for Texas <http://www.act.org/aap/texas/>

Apply Texas <https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/html/about.html>

The Common Application <https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Mission.aspx>

Relevant policy documents, reports and website links

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010, *College Admissions Testing of Graduating Seniors in Texas High Schools Class of 2009* http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/sat_act_index.html

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2000, Closing the Gaps by 2015 -

The Texas Higher Education Plan <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/0379.PDF?CFID=20403413&CFTOKEN=73744162>

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010, Closing the Gaps Progress Report 2010

<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/2045.PDF?CFID=20403413&CFTOKEN=73744162>

Texas Education Agency, About the College and Career Readiness Standards

<http://www.txccrs.org/about/about-ccr.htm>

Texas Education Code (TEC) 51.802, Uniform Admission Policy

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm#51.802>

Texas Education Agency, 2008 Texas Education Strategy for the Fiscal Years 2009-2013

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/stplan/0913_stratplan.pdf

College Board, College Readiness Pathway <http://www.texascollegereadiness.com/>

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, College Readiness Initiatives

<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=B85D3720-0A6F-5485-D132ED569517E4DC>

Source of examples

University of Texas at Austin <http://bealonghorn.utexas.edu/freshmen>

Implementation and Results of the Texas Automatic Admissions Law (HB588) at The University of Texas at Austin, Report 13, 2010 <http://www.utexas.edu/student/admissions/research/HB588-Report13.pdf>

Texas A&M University, Corpus Christie <http://admissions.tamucc.edu/freshman/>



	Country/State/ Territory	United Kingdom* – England, Wales and Northern Ireland
1	Summary	<p>Higher education institutions in the UK set entry criteria for their own programmes and are responsible for making offers of places to applicants. The autonomy which HEIs have in this regard is a highly valued element of the system. Students apply through a centralised applications system called UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions System). UCAS manages the applications and admissions process. A tariff system (which involves assigning points to grades gained on qualifications recognised for entry to HE) has been in place since 2000. HEIs can use tariff points to express the entry requirements for a course, and offers (conditional or unconditional) can also be expressed in terms of tariff points and/or grades. Universities within the Russell Group (a collaboration of 20 research-intensive universities) tend not to use the UCAS tariff as a means of expressing entry requirements or making offers but use the UCAS system for managing the application and offers process. Within the admissions process other contextual data may also be used. This allows institutions to make a holistic assessment of an applicant's potential in the context of barriers which they may have encountered. The UCAS admissions system and the tariff are both currently under review.</p> <p>(* See separate report for Scotland)</p>
2	Country context	<p>Education system prior to HE</p> <p>The UK education system – prior to HE – offers a diversity of academic, vocational, work-based and specialist courses. Applicants to higher education – including school-leavers, mature and international students – bring achievements gained through a range of different kinds of qualifications and experience. These qualifications are recognised within one of two regulatory frameworks: the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCA) – details below.</p> <p>General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE) are the main school-leaving qualifications in England, taken at age 15-18; they can be taken alongside other qualifications such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Assessment for GCSEs includes a combination of school based assessment and controlled assessment. Controlled assessments take place under supervised conditions and are either set by awarding organisations and marked by teachers, or set by teachers and marked by awarding organisations. The level of controlled assessment varies between GCSEs.</p>



Most secondary schools enter their pupils for GCE advanced levels (A levels) which are made up of advanced subsidiary (AS) units and A2 units, which are taken at age 16-18. They are the qualifications that the majority of young people use to gain entry to university. Most units are assessed by examination, but some are assessed internally. A-levels normally take two years to complete full-time and students can choose their 2-4 subjects from a wide range of academic as well as some applied (work-related) subjects. A-levels are placed at level 3 on the UK National Qualifications Framework. Some state schools have joined the independent sector in offering the International Baccalaureate or pre-university qualifications (e.g. Cambridge Pre-U) instead of or as well as A levels.

See http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017 for details of qualifications at level 3.

There are currently six **Examination Boards** available to state schools in the UK (AQA, CIE, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC). All operate nationwide, and most offer a range of qualifications, though not all boards offer every qualification in every area. Schools and FE colleges have a completely free choice between the boards, depending on the qualification offered. Most schools use a mixture of boards for their GCSE qualifications, with a similar situation existing at A-Level.

The **Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)** is a system for recognising skills and qualifications by awarding credit for qualifications and smaller units of learning, which have a specified credit value. Learners can gain qualifications at their own pace along routes that suit them best. See <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-assessments/89-articles/145-explaining-the-qualifications-and-credit-framework> for details.

Admissions staff in higher education institutions are presented with three kinds of awards for entry to higher education:

- Qualifications that continue to be accredited within the National Qualification Framework e.g. A-levels
- Qualifications that are accredited by the QCF e.g. NVQs, BTEC level 3 diplomas
- Credits awarded for the achievement of units from accredited qualifications (generally used to support entry).

Students transferring from school to HE generally apply while engaged in their final programme of study – for which they will not yet have results. While the most common qualification for entry to higher education has been the A-level, over 50% of UK-domiciled applicants in 2009 applied with a combination of qualifications other than three A-levels (based on 2009 UCAS statistics).



The role of schools and colleges

Schools and colleges are responsible for making an assessment of 'predicted grades' for students intending to apply for entry to higher education. This assessment may be based on previous attainment. Predicted grades have a significant bearing on offers subsequently made by universities. If grades are under-predicted, a student may not gain an offer and if over-predicted they may not attain the grades meet the conditions of their offer.

Further Education (FE)

Further education is post-compulsory education (in addition to that received at secondary school), that is distinct from the education offered in universities (higher education). Some qualifications offered in FE colleges – generally more vocationally orientated – can be taken prior to entry to HE and include BTEC Awards, Certificates, and Diplomas, BTEC Nationals, OCR Nationals and NVOs at level 3. Some qualifications offer direct and accelerated progression into undergraduate programmes e.g. some Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) taken in some FE Colleges may enable a student to gain admission to the second or third year of some HE courses. The use of credit frameworks facilitates this.

Higher Education (HE)

Higher education institutions are independent self-governing bodies active in teaching, research and scholarship. HE is provided by many different types of institutions, universities, university colleges, and other publicly designated and autonomous institutions within the sector. The higher education sector offers a diverse range of undergraduate courses and qualifications, such as first degrees, higher national diplomas and foundation degrees. Many courses take place in universities but others are offered at higher education institutions such as colleges, specialist art institutions and agricultural colleges. Individual institutions determine their own admissions criteria for their programmes of study and are autonomous institutions as laid down in legislation.

Higher education in a Further Education setting (HE in FE)

Higher education comprises awards above level 3 on the qualifications framework. English further education colleges (FECs) can provide 'prescribed' higher education courses with funding from HEFCE – the awarding body for higher education. Other non-prescribed courses are offered, largely in vocational and professional areas. The volume of HE provision in FECs represents over 10% of all HE provision. The character of the provision is diverse in volume, range and subject area. HE students in FECs are more likely to be over 25, from underrepresented areas and study part-time. Many colleges use the Qualifications and Credit Framework to organise and accredit their courses.



	<p>Higher education private sector</p> <p>There is a small but expanding private higher education sector that manages its own admissions processes (with a strong focus on internationalisation).</p> <p>NOTES;</p> <p>Note 1: The majority of applicants to higher education (via UCAS) are 20 years and under (77.75% in 2010). The average age of UK domiciled UCAS applicant has increased over the last five years from 20.75 in 2006 to 21.30 in 2010.</p> <p>Note 2: In England and Wales, undergraduate courses tend to be relatively specialised or denominated and are typically three years in duration. Applicants to universities in England and Wales need to bear this in mind. When applying to Scottish universities, for example, where undergraduate honours degrees are usually four years in duration, applications are made to a college and most students only confirm their major in the final two years of study. (Admission to higher education in Scotland is detailed in a separate report, below).</p>
<p>3 Organisations involved in process</p>	<p>UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service</p> <p>UCAS, an organisation with charitable status, is responsible for processing applications to almost all full-time undergraduate degree programmes at universities and colleges in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. UCAS was formed in 1993 by the merger of UCCA (Universities Central Council on Admissions), PCAS (Polytechnics Central Admissions Service) and SCUE (Standing Conference on University Entrance). The organisation manages over 600,000 applications for full-time undergraduate courses every year. UCAS provide online tools to help students to find the right course and provide guidance to higher education institutions (HEIs) to help them manage applications and offers. UCAS also administers the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (postgraduate certificate in education programmes), the Conservatoires UK Admissions Service (practice-based music programmes at UK Conservatoires) and the UK Postgraduate Application and Statistical Service (UKPASS).</p> <p>Higher Education Institutions</p> <p>Individual institutions determine their own admissions criteria for their programmes of study and they are responsible for making decisions on applications and decisions on offers, which are sent to UCAS and thence to applicants. Universities and colleges publish entry requirements for their higher education courses. Many will offer places subject to applicants meeting specific conditions. These conditional offers are generally made based on UCAS tariff points (see below), qualification grades or a combination of points and grades.</p>



HEI's pay a fee as part of their membership agreement with UCAS: member institutions pay annual institutional fees based upon the number of acceptances to that institution (the greater of either an amount equal to £17 per accepted applicant or £1,000 (+VAT) as a minimum annual charge).

QAA: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

The primary responsibility for academic standards and quality in UK higher education rests with individual universities and colleges, each of which is independent and self-governing. QAA checks how well they meet their responsibilities, identifying good practice and making recommendations for improvement.

Section 10 of the QAA *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* deals with Admissions to higher education. The Code is intended to help institutions to assure themselves and others that the policies and procedures they use to attract, recruit, select, admit and enrol students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section10/RecruitmentandAdmissions.pdf>

SPA – Supporting Professionalism in Admissions

SPA was established in May 2006 as the central source of expertise and advice on admissions related issues arising from the recommendations of the Schwartz Report (2004) 'Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice'. SPA provides leadership on the development of fair admissions and makes recommendations on how to ensure professionalism in admissions, student recruitment and widening participation/access. SPA works closely with HE institutions and other stakeholders to enhance quality, transparency, reputation and fairness of admissions policy and practice. SPA has produced a number of good practice statements on aspects of HE admissions practice and policy, (see <http://www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/development-good-practice.html> for a full list).

Ofqual – Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations

Ofqual is the independent regulator of qualifications in England and of vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. Ofqual is indirectly involved in the transition process as it is the organisation that recognises and regulates qualifications that are subsequently recognised for entry to higher education. <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/>



4 The UCAS tariff

What is the UCAS tariff?

The **UCAS Tariff** is a central feature of the system of admissions to higher education in the UK. It was introduced in September 2002 and replaced the pre-existing A-level points system. It was designed to report achievement to HEIs as a points score and to facilitate broad comparisons between different kinds of achievement and different volumes of study. Using the Tariff system, UCAS allocates points to qualifications used for entry to UK higher education. Admissions Offices in HEIs can make flexible offers, by representing entry requirements and/or offers in terms of Tariff points. It allows students to use a range of different qualifications to help secure a place on an undergraduate course.

What qualifications are included in the tariff?

Students can collect Tariff points from a range of different qualifications from school and further education which are recognised as level 3 (NQF) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (level 5/6 in Scotland) or equivalent e.g. GCSEs, Scottish Highers, BTEC Nationals, Key Skills, GNVQs. Courses at lower or higher levels are not included apart from in exceptional circumstances. Over 50% of UK-domiciled applicants in 2009 applied with a combination of qualifications other than three A-levels (based on 2009 UCAS statistics).

See: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017

(See **Appendix 1**: Qualifications covered by the UCAS Tariff and **Appendix 2**: The Tariff Schedule)

How are UCAS tariff points assigned?

Tariff points are allocated to qualifications following a benchmarking process where a team of HE academics and admissions staff, supported by a qualifications expert and UCAS staff, considers how well specific qualifications help prepare students for higher education study. Recommendations for Tariff points are reviewed and agreed by a panel of higher education admissions tutors. The Irish Leaving Certificate and the International Baccalaureate have been reviewed, using this benchmarking process, and are included in the Tariff Schedule (See **Appendix 2**). UCAS does not actively market the UCAS Tariff to awarding organisations. Rather, awarding organisations make requests for UCAS to consider the inclusion of their qualifications in the Tariff – thus not all awards have been allocated Tariff points.



How are Tariff points used?

The Tariff is used by HEIs when deciding on course entry requirements and when making conditional offers. HEIs can use the Tariff to make comparisons between applicants with different qualifications in the admissions process. Tariff points are designed to be used for entry to higher education study in any discipline. Universities and colleges publish entry requirements for their higher education courses, sometimes subject to applicants meeting specific conditions. Conditional offers are generally made based on:

- a. UCAS Tariff points
- b. Qualification grades
- c. A combination of (a) and (b) above

Entry requirements and conditional offers for particular courses, however, will often require a minimum level of achievement in a specified subject (for example '300 UCAS points to include grade A at A-level Chemistry'). The achievement of a points score does not give an automatic entitlement to entry, and many other factors may be taken into account in the admissions process.

Although Tariff points can be accumulated in a variety of ways, not all of these will necessarily be acceptable for entry to a particular course. Hence, entry requirements for some courses may state that certain qualifications are not accepted as contributing to the Tariff points requirement.

There is no ceiling to the number of points that can be accumulated. There is no double counting. Certain qualifications within the Tariff build on qualifications in the same subject. In these cases only the qualification with the higher Tariff score will be counted.

Use of the Tariff (as a mean of expressing requirements or making offers) may also vary from department to department within any one university or college, and may in some cases be dependent on the programme being offered.



5 Application process

How do students select a course?

UCAS provides an online search tool which provides information on what qualifications are acceptable for entry to specific courses in universities across the UK <http://www.ucas.com/students/coursesearch/>

HEIs are encouraged to provide **Entry Profiles** which assist in demonstrating transparency and give a fuller picture of what admissions decision-makers are seeking. Entry Profiles provide details about courses, the university or college offering each course, entry qualifications, any particular skills and competencies applicants need for the course, selection criteria (including details of any admissions test, interview and/or pre-work), and the admissions policy. They are designed to help prospective entrants decide which universities or colleges and which courses to apply to, as many courses with the same title may be very different in terms of content and study methods. They are compiled by staff at the university or college, who understand what an incoming student needs to know about each course, and what kind of personal qualities, interests and experiences it will be helpful to have to be successful on the chosen course.

Applicants can make up to **five choices** for most courses (different rules apply for applications to Oxford, Cambridge, medicine, dentistry and veterinary science) and there is no preference order. Applications are sent to all chosen universities and colleges at the same time but each university and college will only see details of choices for their course/s – they do not see a student's other choices until the student has received their final decision. This principle of invisibility applies until an applicant has made all of their replies to their chosen HEIs. If an applicant makes fewer than five choices, they can add more later (within the deadlines for adding choices). There are **three application deadlines** for courses through UCAS – 15 October, 15 January and 24 March – depending on the course/s chosen.

How do students apply?

UCAS offers an online application system. On the online application system – 'Apply' – applicants provide the following details:

- Personal details
- Additional information (UK applicants only)
- Student finance (UK applicants only)
- Choices
- Education
- Employment
- Personal statement
- Reference.



Application fee for students (2012)

£11 for an application to one course at one university or college.

£22 if applying to more than one course, university or college (up to 5 choices).

What is the purpose of the Personal Statement?

In the Personal Statement an applicant explains **why they want to study the course/s** they are applying for. For some courses, this could be used as the basis for an **interview**. UCAS provides advice on how to write Personal Statements and a number of commercial publications are also available to advise applicants. UCAS advises students that the two most important things to include are:

“Why you’re applying for the course: this is particularly important when you’re applying for a subject that you have not studied before. Tell the university the reasons why that subject interests you, and include evidence that you understand what’s required to study the course, e.g. if applying for psychology courses, show that you know how scientific the subject is. Why you’re suitable for the course: tell the universities the skills and experience you have that will help you to succeed on the course”.

Applicants write **one** Personal Statement which will be used for all course choices, so it needs to explain why they are interested e.g. in both aspects of a joint programme or they need to identify common themes and skills that are relevant to their multiple choices.

SPA advises HEIs to make their usage of the personal statement transparent to applicants, including the weight given to the personal statement and the reference, via their admissions policies.

References

A full written reference is required (unless otherwise stated by a university or for a particular programme). UCAS provides guidance on how to arrange references. A referee should know the applicant well enough to be in a position to comment on their suitability for higher education. References are usually written by someone who knows applicants academically and can comment on how applicants work and interact with other students and teachers, for example. Where applicants have left school/college for several years a reference from a current or former employer (or in the case of voluntary work a supervisor) is accepted.



6	Allocation, decision making process	<p>What is the role of UCAS in the applications process?</p> <p>Once UCAS receive a completed application, the following steps occur.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UCAS processes the application – applicant can view progress on line ('Track' system). (UCAS and the universities receive results from Exam Boards before schools do) 2. UCAS sends a letter by post confirming personal details and choices. 3. Applicant's chosen universities and colleges can view their application. Institutions can only view applications for their institution (they DO NOT see where else applicants have applied). They will only see any other choices after all decisions have been received and replied to. 4. The universities and colleges decide whether to make an offer or not, considering an application against their own admissions criteria (this may take weeks or months but SPA advises HEIs to be transparent about the timescale). They send their decision to UCAS and decisions are displayed online on 'Track'.
7	Role of HEIs in making offers	<p>What is the role of HEIs in the admission process?</p> <p>HEIs set course entry requirements, review applications and make conditional offers. They have autonomy in this matter. Universities and colleges publish entry requirements for their higher education courses, sometimes subject to applicants meeting specific conditions. Conditional offers are generally made based on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. UCAS Tariff points b. Qualification grades c. A combination of (a) and (b) above <p>(See Case Studies below)</p> <p>HEIs can use the tariff to make comparisons between applicants with different qualifications in the admissions process. Some universities have established a way of comparing achievements in terms of grades achieved on recognised qualifications – in these cases equivalences (generally to A-level grades) are indicated. UCAS Tariff points are designed to be used for entry to higher education study in any discipline. Where the tariff is used, entry requirements and conditional offers for particular courses, however, will often require a minimum level of achievement in a specified subject (for example '300 UCAS points to include grade A at A-level Chemistry').</p>



	<p>The achievement of a points score does not give an automatic entitlement to entry, and many other factors may be taken into account in the admissions process. The use of the UCAS Tariff may also vary from department to department within any one university or college, and may in some cases be dependent on the programme being offered.</p> <p>Each university is governed by a HEFCE cap which determines how many students they will be funded for. There is a financial penalty for those that exceed that cap (at an institutional level). At a central level, universities need to ensure admissions figures between schools/courses balance.</p> <p>Note: This internal part of the admissions process varies significantly between institutions – see two Case Studies below</p>
<p>8 Other criteria used (other than points/grades)</p>	<p>Are other admissions tests or interviews used in the admissions process?</p> <p>Some universities and colleges require an applicant to pass an admissions test as well as standard qualifications for courses in certain subjects e.g. for the Health Professions, Law or for certain disciplines in some universities e.g. English in Oxford or Computer Science in Cambridge.</p> <p>SPA has researched the use by HEIs of admissions tests, including use of the main national tests for subjects including medicine, dentistry and law, and tests devised by a specific HEI for their own use e.g. to test applicants' literacy and numeracy. For further details of SPA's work in this area see http://www.spa.ac.uk/admission-tests/index.html Interviews have been used for many years for applicants for places at UK universities and colleges, and are one element that may be used in the holistic assessment of applicants for a place on a course or programme. Policies vary greatly and some universities interview only selected or borderline applicants. Some do not interview at all. UCAS provide some guidance to students about preparing for and getting the most from the experience.</p> <p>SPA provides guidance around good practice on the use of interviews. SPA's good practice statement includes information about the written guidance which should be provided to all those involved in the interview process and states that HEIs need to be clear about why they are interviewing, and how this contributes to the overall admissions decision-making process. SPA also recommends that HEIs should provide clear guidance for staff relating to how applicants are selected for interview.</p> <p>See http://www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/documents/</p> <p>For an example of one university policy on Interviews see http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/webteam/shared/undergraduate/pdfs/Admissions_interview_policy_May_2007.pdf</p>



9 Other information used in admissions process

Is there any other information available to UCAS and admitting HEIs?

For many years most HEIs have used data that is self declared by an individual applicant and/or their referee in an UCAS application, such as disability, illness, in care/ looked after, main carer for another/others, disrupted schooling, being part of a compact or progression agreement scheme etc.

What is 'contextual data'?

Universities and colleges may also use information called '**contextual data**', as well as an applicant's information, when considering an application. This allows them to make a holistic assessment of an applicant's potential in the context of any barriers which they may have encountered. Contextual data for applicants to full-time undergraduate courses is any data or information which may be part of, or additional to, that provided by the applicant in the UCAS applications process. This data, available from publicly available datasets, sets the application in its educational or socio-economic context. Contextual data can be used to support access, inclusion and progression, from fair access to the professions, fair admissions decision making to information underpinning widening participation and outreach.

The data that will be made available via UCAS has been agreed through consultation with SPA and the institutions that currently use such data, together with agreement from the administrations of the UK. It is from publicly held datasets. (See **Appendix 3**). UCAS will provide information free for 2012 entry and HEIs will need to sign up to avail of this. The information will be linked to the applicant or can be made available as generic data sets. Initially two years worth of data will be available, for the 2009 and 2010 academic years.

Currently only a small number of institutions are using contextual data to inform admissions decision-making. (See one example of its use below). SPA is working throughout the UK with HEIs, government departments, agencies and UCAS to take the use of contextual data forward, keeping school and college organisations in the loop. SPA has agreed with the sector a set of principles on the use of contextual data.

<http://www.spa.ac.uk/contextual-data/principles-contextual-data.html>.



10 Institutional
Case Study A
London
Metropolitan
University

Institutional Case Study A – (using the Tariff as a means of expressing offers and making offers)

London Metropolitan University

To study at London Met all students need to:

- Be 18 or over at the start of the course
- Have GCSE grade C in English language or key skills qualification level 3 or equivalent.

In addition, minimum general entry requirements for undergraduate programmes are specified in terms of grades achieved on a range of recognised qualifications. For most courses applicants need to hold at least one of the combinations of qualifications e.g.

- At least 2 passes at A-level and three other subjects at GCSE
- Advanced level GNVQ with a merit grade
- BTEC National Diploma or Certificate with a pass grade
- The Scottish Certificate of Education with passes in 5 subjects with three at higher level
- The Irish Leaving Certificate with passes at grade C in 4 subjects at higher level
- International Baccalaureate with a minimum of 28 points and 4 points in English (see alternative IELTS/TOEFL entry requirements)
- Recognised access course

Note: This is not an exhaustive list, see <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate-entry-requirements.cfm>



How are entry requirements for individual courses generally expressed (in terms of the UCAS tariff, sometimes with other requirements)?

B.Sc. in Graphic Design

UCAS code: W214 BA/GDes

Duration: 3 years (f/t), 4-5 years (p/t)

Full-time applicants: apply through UCAS

Part-time applicant: apply direct to Admissions in London Met

Entry requirements: 280 UCAS POINTS including at least 2 A-Levels in applied art and design subjects or BTEC National Diploma or BTEC Foundation Diploma, or new Diploma including A-level specialist subjects in applied art and design.

In addition, applicants will be asked to attend an interview with a portfolio of creative work.

Accelerated Study

Applicants may progress directly onto level 2 of the degree if they have an HND at merit, and pass an interview with portfolio and written work.

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/ug-prospectus/courses-11-12/graphic-design.cfm>

11 Institutional Case Study B: University of Manchester

Institutional Case Study B: University of Manchester

In the University of Manchester – one of the largest universities in the UK – the application decision making process is devolved to academic units (Schools) with the support of a centralised Student Admissions Office. This office is responsible for coordinating the University's undergraduate and postgraduate admissions activities and for advising on relevant policy matters. It works closely with staff based in faculties and 22 schools across the University and other external agencies, including UCAS. The university – one of the Russell Group – is a 'selective' institution i.e. entry is very competitive, with very few 'recruiting' schools i.e. where there are more places than applications. The university has its own computerised system ('Campus Solutions') to help manage the applications process – this system is directly linked with UCAS. Schools, however, are responsible for the decision-making process. The admissions process is generally managed by administrative staff within the school, with academic staff establishing target applicant intake and identifying the criteria for admission and for assessment of applications.



What is the scale of admissions?

Undergraduate applications:	55,400 (2010)
Offers made:	28,400
Registrations:	8,600

What are the factors in gaining entry to the University of Manchester?

Strong examination results are the main factor in the admission of students to undergraduate courses and the University accepts a wide range of qualifications, UK and international. Offers are expressed in terms of three A-level grades (or equivalent). Any additional A-levels will not be included within an offer. Equivalence with other (level 3) qualifications (e.g. IB, Irish Leaving Certificate) are established internally with reference to the UCAS tariff in the interest of transparency and consistency from school to school and from year to year. Evidence of recent study is generally required for courses, but Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) can be used to consider relevant skills learnt through work experience. Applicants who have participated in access programmes are entitled to differential consideration at stage 1.

How are entry requirements expressed?

B.Sc. in Geography, in University of Manchester

UCAS course code: F802

UCAS institution code: M20

Degree awarded: BSc.

Duration: 3 years

Number of places/applicants: 190 / 1200 for both BA and BSc.

Entry requirements*

A level: Grades AAB-ABB (two AS Levels accepted in place of one A-level).

GCSE: Min. grade C in English Language and Mathematics

IB: 35-33 points overall

Irish LC: Grades AAAABB-AABBBB

Interview: Not required

* These 'requirements' are 'typical A level offers'. This is not the minimum requirement, more like a statement of the likely demand. Requirements are also stated for a range of other UK (Scottish and Welsh) and non-UK qualifications.

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/search2012/scholarships/course/?code=00576>



How does the process work internally?

An **Admission Framework** supports the principles of fair and transparent admissions. It outlines the stages in the selection process and how a final decision is formed on the basis of an overall consideration of each application.

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Achieved and predicted qualifications – Level 2 (GCSE or equivalent) and Level 3 (A-level or equivalent)	Additional requirements, as evidenced by applicants personal statement and school reference	Aptitude and additional measures, e.g. UKCAT, course-specific test, skills test, portfolio	Interview	Confirmation

Individual schools decide which stages to use in selecting students for each course; this information is published in the relevant course profile. Decisions on conditional offers are made as the applications come in from beginning of admissions cycle – effectively there is no 'closing date'. Some schools make offers to some applicants and keep a bundle under continuous consideration to select the best applicants on a rolling basis i.e. a 'rolling gathered field'.

Are other criteria used other than academic scores?

Performance on **aptitude** and additional measures (e.g. portfolio or tests) against the required measure may be considered, alongside other information such as academic grades, personal statement, referee report and, where relevant, interview performance.

Where **interviews** are conducted as part of the admissions process – for a minority of courses, e.g. in professional areas – schools may look for aspects of skills, suitability and experience which cannot easily be assessed by other methods. Information provided in the Personal Statement is likely to be explored further at this stage. 'Selective' interviews are used to select the best applicants for a course. Others may be held to ensure that applicants are familiar with and are suited to the requirements of a course.

Beyond their use in interviews, generally **Personal Statements** are neither used nor rated in the selection process. Concerns about the differential levels of support available to students preparing them is just one factor in the decline in their use. Where they are used by school, a relatively low weighting is advised by the Applications Office.



		<p>'Contextual information' is now considered in stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the admissions framework by all schools at the University of Manchester. This information helps build up a full and rounded view of achievement and potential and enables schools to identify applicants with the same academic scores who have actually achieved more, given their circumstances (see Sections below).</p> <p>What does the university need to do in the offers process?</p> <p>When exam results are published, the university, via UCAS, confirms offers to applicants who meet the terms of their offer. For those who do not meet the terms of their offer there is a no guarantee that they will be offered a place from the university but they may still have access to opportunities in the UCAS 'Clearing House'.</p> <p>Details: http://www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/howtoapply/entry-requirements/</p>
12	Use of 'contextual' data – an example	<p>How is contextual data used? – an example from the University of Manchester</p> <p>In order to build up a full and rounded view of applicant achievement and potential, the Student Recruitment, Admissions and International Development Division in Manchester University will be collating contextual information to supplement undergraduate applications for 2012 entry onwards. This will apply to UK applicants under the age of 21 only. No decisions will be made on the basis of this information alone and all undergraduate applicants must meet the university's standard academic criteria to be considered for entry.</p> <p>Four pieces of contextual information are supplemented to academic Schools, where available:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The educational context of the applicant's school or college 2. The performance of the applicant's school or college at A-level or equivalent level 3. The postcode that an applicant gives as their home address, flagging where an applicant lives in an area which is underrepresented in leading research-intensive universities 4. Whether a candidate has been looked after/in care for more than three months.



	<p>A combination of the above factors is used to avoid over-reliance on any one indicator. Where applicants are predicted to achieve standard academic entry criteria, contextual data is considered alongside information on the UCAS form to provide a fuller picture of the applicant. Where candidates with an overall 'flag' meet standard academic entry criteria, they are recommended for further consideration by admissions tutors. This further consideration does not result in either an automatic offer or a lower offer to candidates, but can include, among other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional examination of the personal statement • Making available information about an applicant's background to interviewers • Further consideration during confirmation of final results. <p>See http://www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/howtoapply/contextual/</p> <p>A number of key principles and processes are in place concerning contextual data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence based and relevant to the admissions process • Individually applied (no quotas or targets) • Used only to complement and enhance existing selection mechanism • Valid/verifiable and reliable • Used to provide fairness and equality of opportunity to all applicants • Transparent to applicants and advisors in terms of what it is, and how and when it is used • Professionally applied by trained staff • Rigorously monitored and subject to audit trails. <p>See further details: http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=8128</p>
13 Making offers	<p>What can an applicant expect to receive from UCAS?</p> <p>Applicants receive standard letters from UCAS depending on the status of their choices, decisions and replies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer letter - when a university or college makes an offer • Unsuccessful letter - when an application to a university or college has been unsuccessful • Replying to Offers letter - when applicant has received decisions from all their choices and received at least one offer. UCAS seeks a reply to offer(s) by a given date



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status Check letter - to confirm that UCAS have recorded replies correctly • Confirmation letter - if unconditional offer accepted, or if place has been confirmed by university or college once exam results are published • New Options letter - information about other options available if a place has not been confirmed.
14	<p>Accepting offers</p> <p>When UCAS receive decisions from all choices (institutions and/or courses) made by an applicant and they have at least one offer, UCAS email applicants to let them know and asks applicants to respond to each offer, in one of the following ways:</p> <p>Firm acceptance: Their preferred choice out of all the offers they have received. They only have one firm acceptance.</p> <p>Insurance acceptance: They can accept an offer as an insurance choice if their firm choice is a conditional offer. Their insurance choice can be conditional or unconditional and acts as a back-up to their firm choice. They can only have one insurance acceptance.</p> <p>Decline: Once they have decided which offer to accept firmly, and which (if any) to accept as an insurance, they must decline all other offers. If they don't want to accept any of the offers, they can decline them all. They will then be eligible to enter the Clearing facility depending upon their circumstances.</p>
15	<p>What happens if...?</p> <p>What happens where an applicant exceeds 'predicted' performance?</p> <p>If an applicant has met and exceeded the conditions of a conditional offer that they accepted and was subsequently confirmed by the university, they have five days to research places which correspond more closely to their actual performance. Applicants nominate themselves for this system (called Adjustment) and speak directly to universities and colleges to explore available places. The institution may decide to offer an unconditional place. There is no guarantee that vacancies will be available on the desired course/s. This is a relatively new feature of the admissions system and has been used by a relatively small number of applicants.</p> <p>What happens with students who do not receive an offer?</p> <p>UCAS offers a 'Clearing' service that operates between mid-July and September. Applicants can take part in Clearing if they have already applied through UCAS and they fall into categories such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not receive any offers • Declined all offers or did not respond by the due date • Did not meet the conditions for the offer(s) held.



		<p>Course vacancies in Clearing are published on the UCAS website from mid-August until late-September.</p> <p>Applicants who apply after 30 June also enter Clearing.</p>
16	Reviews and ongoing developments	<p>Review of UCAS Tariff – The Qualifications Information Review</p> <p>In 2001 UCAS introduced the Tariff mechanism to facilitate comparisons between different kinds of qualifications. However, since this time, the number, diversity and complexity of qualifications offering pathways to higher education has expanded substantially. The nature and delivery of Higher Education itself is also changing.</p> <p>The Qualifications Information Review was launched in July 2010 to address concerns that the Tariff had not kept pace with these changes. The QI Review is seeking to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and articulate what requirements learners, institutions and other stakeholders have for information about qualifications to enable fair, transparent and efficient admissions to higher education • Review how effective the UCAS Tariff and other approaches are at meeting these needs • Work with a wide range of stakeholders, including regulators and awarding organisations to develop and consult on improvements and alternative approaches. <p>The review has completed an initial phase of information gathering about the qualifications information valued by HEIs across the UK. This is being used to inform the development of proposals for a new or revised system of qualifications information which will be consulted on in early 2012.</p> <p>Additional and further information about the UCAS Qualifications Information Review is available from http://www.ucas.com/qireview</p>
		<p>Review of the system – Admissions Process Review (APR)</p> <p>The admission process for people entering higher education has changed very little since its introduction over 50 years ago when the number of applications was much lower, with a lower percentage of successful applicants. Despite massification of higher education and greater diversity in the system the operating rules and timescales have remained broadly unchanged. Recent analysis by UCAS has shown that, on average, over 20 transactions are now undertaken by an admissions office to result in one successful applicant. There are also indications that applicants are not using their choices wisely or are facing issues associated with the admissions process.</p>



Improved efficiencies in the admissions process are now required, while retaining fairness of access for applicants. UCAS has commenced an admissions process review that will map future models of admissions that could deliver improved efficiencies for members, increase certainty for applicants, better services and outcomes for applicants and an improved student experience. The review will consider synergies with student finance applications and the possibility of extending UCAS membership outside of the UK.

The objectives of the review are to:

- develop a flexible, responsive and cost-effective system that can accommodate a wide range of admissions models
- design a system that is tailored to institutional requirements in a way which is efficient for UCAS and its members
- support choice, fair access, and social mobility and widening participation.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmbis/writev/885/m42.htm>

The Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) and links with higher education

The QCF was launched in 2008 and is in an early stage of development. The QCF allows achievements to be recognised and recorded through the award of credits and qualifications. It supports the accumulation and transfer of credits and the easy identification of achievement in terms of level and size (See **Appendix 4**). In this way, learners have maximum flexibility and range of opportunities and can be reliably recognised for their achievements.

The scope of the QCF is limited to qualifications offered outside the degree-awarding powers of universities and other HEIs (these are offered within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)). Currently, most of the qualifications offered within the QCF are vocational in nature, up to and including higher levels of the framework. The government is discussing a timetable for bringing in other qualifications e.g. A-levels, GCSEs and diplomas into a single credit framework.

The framework was established, in part, to help widen participation by gradually changing the cohort of leaders progressing from the QCF to higher education. The QCF offers considerable potential for widening participation in further and higher education which can be achieved with National Qualification Framework qualifications, qualifications that are accredited by the QCF. Credits awarded for the achievement of units from accredited qualifications can be used to support entry (e.g. equivalence, exemptions, advanced standing).

http://www.qcda.gov.uk/docs/QCF_HE_brochure.pdf



Appendix 1: Qualifications are included in the UCAS Tariff

AAT Level 3 NVQ in Accounting	EDI Level 3 Certificates in Accounting and Accounting (IAS) Essential Skills (Northern Ireland)
AAT Level 3 Diploma in Accounting (QCF)	Extended Project (stand alone)
Advanced Diploma	Free-standing Mathematics qualifications
Advanced Extension Awards	Functional Skills
Advanced Placement Programme	GCE (AS, AS Double Award, A level, A level Double Award and A level (with additional AS))
Arts Award (Gold)	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (from 2012 entry onwards)
ASDAN Community Volunteering qualification	ifs School of Finance (Certificate and Diploma in Financial Studies)
Asset Languages	iMedia (OCR Level 3 Certificate/Diploma for iMedia Professionals)
British Horse Society Stage 3 Horse Knowledge & Care, Stage 3 Riding and Preliminary Teacher's Certificate	International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma
BTEC Awards (NQF)	International Baccalaureate (IB) Certificate
BTEC Certificates and Extended Certificates (NQF)	Irish Leaving Certificate (Higher and Ordinary levels)
BTEC Diplomas (NQF)	IT Professionals (iPRO) Certificate and Diploma
BTEC National in Early Years (NQF)	Key Skills (Levels 2, 3 and 4)
BTEC Nationals (NQF)	Music examinations at grades 6, 7 and 8
BTEC QCF qualifications	OCR Level 3 Certificate in Mathematics for Engineering
BTEC specialist QCF qualifications	OCR Level 3 Certificate for Young Enterprise
CACHE Award, Certificate and Diploma in Child Care and Education	OCR Nationals (Certificate, Diploma and Extended Diploma)
Cambridge ESOL Examinations (from 2011 entry onwards)	Principal Learning Wales
Cambridge Pre-U	Progression Diploma
City and Guilds Land Based Services level 3 qualifications	Rockschool Music Practitioners qualifications (from 2012 entry onwards)
CISI Introduction to Securities and Investment	Scottish qualifications
CoPE - Certificate of Personal Effectiveness	Speech and Drama (grades 6, 7 and 8 and Performance Studies)
Dance qualifications (graded and vocational graded qualifications (from 2012 entry onwards))	Sports Leaders UK
Diploma in Fashion Retail Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art & Design, and Art, Design & Media)	Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma (Core)
Essential Skills Wales	Source: http://www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff/qualifications



Appendix 2: Examples of tariff points for a selection of qualifications

Qualification and Grade					Tariff points
GCE & AVCE Double Award	A level with additional AS (9 units)	GCE A level and AVCE	GCE AS Double Award	GCE AS & AS VCE	
A*A*					280
A*A					260
AA					240
AB					220
BB	A*A				200
BC	AA				180
	AB				170
CC					160
	BB				150
CD	BC	A*			140
DD	CC	A	AA		120
	CD		AB		110
DE		B	BB		100
	DD		BC		90
EE	DE	C	CC		80
			CD		70
	EE	D	DD	A	60
			DE	B	50
		E	EE	C	40
				D	30
				E	20

http://ucas.com/he_staff/quals/ucas_tariff/tariff#gce



BTEC Nationals			
Award	Certificate	Diploma	Tariff Points
		DDD	360
		DDM	320
		DMM	280
	DD	MMM	240
	DM	MMP	200
	MM	MPP	160
D	MP	PPP	120
M	PP		80
P			40

Irish Leaving Certificate		
Higher	Ordinary	Tariff Points
A1		90
A2		77
B1		71
B2		64
B3		58
C1		52
C2		45
C3	A1	39
D1		33
D2	A2	26
D3	B1	20
	B2	14
	B3	7



Scottish Qualifications				
Advanced Higher	Higher	Intermediate 2	Standard Grade	Tariff Points
A				120
B				100
C				80
D	A			72
	B			60
	C			48
	D	A		42
			Band 1	38
		B		35
		C	Band 2	28

OCR Nationals			
Certificate	Diploma	Extended Diploma	Tariff Points
		D1	360
		D2/M1	320
		M2	280
	D	M3	240
	M1	P1	200
	M2/P1	P2	160
D	P2	P3	120
M	P3		80
P			40

Source: <http://resources.glos.ac.uk/apply/undergraduate/tariff.cfm>

See http://www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff/tariffables/ for full listing of tariff points for all recognised qualifications



Appendix 3: Contextual Data

The information provided by UCAS will provide free for 2012 entry, that HEIs will need to sign up to take, will be as below.

1.	School performance average of students achieving 5 A*-C GCSE including English or Welsh and mathematics or equivalent
	• England, Wales and Northern Ireland
	Scottish Standard grade equivalent
	• Scotland
2.	School performance average QCA point score for best 8 GCSEs
	• England, Wales and Northern Ireland
	Scottish Standard grade equivalent
	• Scotland
3.	School performance average QCA points per A level entry (or equivalent)
	• England, Wales and Northern Ireland
	UCAS tariff point score per Scottish Highers entry
	• Scotland
4.	School performance average QCA points per A level student (or equivalent)
	• England, Wales and Northern Ireland
	School performance average UCAS tariff points per Scottish Highers entry
	• Scotland
5.	Percentage of students at the school entitled to free school meals
	• England, Wales and Northern Ireland
	Percentage of students at the school registered for free school meals
	• Scotland
6.	Percentage of students at the school entitled to educational maintenance allowance - (note this information will be available for one year only for England as EMA will cease thereafter in England).
	• England, Wales and Northern Ireland
	Percentage of students at the school registered for educational maintenance allowance
	• Scotland
7.	Lives in a low progression to higher education neighbourhood (Polar 2)



Appendix 4: The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

The QCF is a unit and credit based system for recognising skills and qualifications. It does this by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). Each unit has a credit value. This value specifies the number of credits gained by learners who complete that unit. The flexibility of the system allows learners to gain qualifications at their own pace along routes that suit them best. The QCF is a regulated framework. Ofqual, together with its partner regulators in Wales (DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA), is responsible for regulation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

The QCF aims to provide for a simple yet flexible structure that allows for the maintenance and continuing development of a qualifications system that is:

- inclusive
- responsive
- accessible
- non-bureaucratic.

The QCF allows achievements to be recognised and recorded through the award of credits and qualifications. It supports the accumulation and transfer of credits and the easy identification of each achievement's level and size. In this way, learners have maximum flexibility and range of opportunities and can be reliably recognised for their achievements.

Units are the building blocks of all qualifications. The development of units within the QCF is explicitly separated from the development of rules of combination, the accreditation of qualifications and the subsequent assessment of units and award of credits and qualifications. The qualifications system has eight main elements:

- developing units
- placing units in the unit databank
- developing qualifications
- accrediting qualifications
- offering units and qualifications to learners
- assessing achievement
- awarding credits
- awarding qualifications.



QCF units

QCF maintain a unit databank. Awarding organisations can place units in the unit databank without further intervention from the Ofqual. Once units are in the databank, they may be used to build rules of combination. Awarding organisations subsequently use agreed rules of combination to develop qualifications and submit these for accreditation. At this point the units included in the qualification are made available to learners and the qualification is offered for use. The awarding organisation is responsible for carrying out assessments of units and awarding credits and qualifications.

Identifying QCF qualifications:

Every unit and qualification within the QCF has a **credit value** and a **level**. One credit represents ten notional hours of learning, showing how much time the average learner would take to complete the unit or qualification. Levels indicate difficulty and vary from entry (1) to level 8. There are three types of qualification:

- Awards (1 to 12 credits)
- Certificates (13 to 36 credits)
- Diplomas (37 credits or more)

The **title** of a qualification within the QCF indicates its difficulty, how long it will take the average learner to complete, and its general content, using the following information:

- Qualification level (from lowest, entry level to level 8 at the top)
- Qualification size (award/certificate/diploma)
- Content of the qualification

e.g. GCSEs (grade A*–C) are level 2, GCE A levels are level 3 and a PhD is a level 8.

See register of all ad recognised awarding bodies and qualifications. <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>

Ofqual operate the **regulatory requirements** that apply to accredited qualifications and to (education, training and/or awarding) organisations that operate within the QCF. Ofqual monitor the performance of recognised organisations and the quality of units and qualifications they develop.

Sources and websites for further details:

UK Education System and Qualifications

Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/>

Examinations <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/>

Examination boards: AQA, CIE, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC).

For profit higher education institutions

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/PrivateProvidersmar10.pdf>



Frameworks

National Qualifications Framework: <http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/degreeprogrammes/documents/NQF.pdf>

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017

<http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-assessments/89-articles/145-explaining-the-qualifications-and-credit-framework>

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-assessments/89-articles/145-explaining-the-qualifications-and-credit-framework>

http://www.qcda.gov.uk/docs/QCF_HE_brochure.pdf

Framework for qualification in higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/FHEQ08.pdf>

Northern Ireland: <http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/>

UCAS related information

UCAS <http://www.ucas.com/>

Guide to applying <http://www.ucas.com/students/apply/>

Notice of UCAS Qualifications Information Review www.ucas.com/qireview

UCAS points for the Leaving Certificate <http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/UCAS0204.pdf>

Supporting Professional Admissions

SPA www.spa.ac.uk

Guidelines on good practice, interviews <http://www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/documents/GoodPracticeInterviewsforHEApplicants-4thDraft200608.doc> and admissions tests <http://www.spa.ac.uk/admission-tests/index.html>

Unistats <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/aboutUnistats.do;jsessionid=0C1F1EE05B20F8950ACE54B75DA96A9B.worker2>

Institutional examples

London Metropolitan University <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/courses/>

University of Manchester <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/>

Use of contextual data: <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=8128>



Country/State/ Territory	Scotland
	<p>Note: This country report should be read in conjunction with the report for the rest of the UK, in terms of the administration arrangements for the centralised part of the admissions system, managed by UCAS. The country report for Scotland offers a case study of the admissions process in one Scottish university</p>
1	<p>Summary</p> <p>The admissions system for entry to higher education in Scotland is administered by higher education institutions (HEIs) in conjunction with the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Students applying to a Scottish university apply through UCAS and the same processes apply as detailed in the report for the UK. Scottish universities, generally express entry requirements in terms of grades gained in Scottish 'Highers', indicating equivalences with other qualifications. Some universities do not frame offers in terms of UCAS tariff points, nor do they make use of the tariff at confirmation.</p>
2	<p>Country context</p> <p>Education system prior to HE</p> <p>Scotland has its own post-primary curriculum and qualifications framework that are separate from those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Traditionally, the Scottish system at secondary school level has emphasised breadth across a range of subjects, while in the rest of the UK there is an emphasis on a smaller range of subjects in greater depth. In Year 4 of secondary school (age 15/16 years) pupils sit Standard (or Intermediate) Grade exams (usually 7 subjects). At the end of Year 5 pupils sit their Highers and for those who wish to remain at school for the final year (Year 6), a combination of more Highers and Advanced Highers can be taken.</p> <p>Higher: Highers are taken in 5th year (generally 5 subjects) and are normally needed for entry into university or college to study for degree or Higher National Certificate or Diploma courses (HNCs or HNDs).</p> <p>Advanced Higher: Advanced Highers are aimed at students who have passed Highers, and are usually taken in sixth year of school or at college. These courses extend the skills and knowledge gained at Higher level and are useful for entry to university or employment. Schools generally offer only a small choice of Advanced Highers (4-5).</p>



While pupils can go to university at the end of Year 5, as Highers provide the entry requirements for Scottish universities, it has become more common for students to remain until Year 6, taking further Highers and/or taking Advanced Highers. Most applicants (90%) who transfer from the Scottish school system apply to university while in 6th Year and already have results for Highers from 5th year.

Qualifications at the secondary school and post-secondary (further education) level are provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), which is the national awarding and accrediting body in Scotland. It is also the sole examination board. Courses, delivered through various schools, colleges, centres, Independent schools, will often take non-Scottish qualifications – as will colleges in technical subjects (sometimes preferring City & Guilds or BTEC).

Colleges – Further Education

Scotland's 41 Colleges provide education and training for young people who choose to follow a vocational route at the end of compulsory education, age 16. They offer a diverse curriculum – including vocational, further and higher education – to a range of people (young and adult) and communities. With enrolments of approximately 440,000 annually and a wide geographical coverage the sector plays an important role in the Government's lifelong learning and social inclusion agendas. They offer a wide range of vocational qualifications including SVQs, HNCs and HNDs. The first two years of higher education (e.g. in the form of an HND) may be taken in an FE College, followed by attendance at university.

See <http://scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/UniversitiesColleges>.

Higher education

Scotland has 20 autonomous higher education institutions (HEIs) including 14 campus-based universities, one distance-learning university, an educational partnership institution based in the Highlands and Islands, two art schools, a conservatoire and an agricultural college. All are state-funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Scottish universities' programmes of undergraduate higher education are generally longer than their counterparts elsewhere in the UK. An 'ordinary' degree usually takes three years in Scotland, an honours degree takes four years. (Specialist degrees e.g. medicine, veterinary studies take longer). Once students gain entry to a college, faculty or programme they can choose and change their specialisation at a later stage. This offers great flexibility for students, but entry into particular courses/subjects can sometimes be over- or under-subscribed.



		<p>All Scottish qualifications have been brought into a single unifying framework, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), which describes qualifications in terms of their level and credit value in terms of SCQF points. Qualifications within Scotland's education and training system can be aligned with qualifications at higher education levels elsewhere in the UK.</p> <p>See http://www.scqf.org.uk/The%20Framework/</p>
3	Organisations involved in process	<p>UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service</p> <p>UCAS manages applications for full-time undergraduate courses (See details in UK report).</p> <p>Higher Education Institutions</p> <p>Individual institutions determine their own admissions criteria for their programmes of study and are responsible for making decisions on applications and for making decisions on offers, which are sent to UCAS and thence to applicants. There are some direct applications.</p> <p>QAA Scotland: QAA has a separate Scottish office, known as QAA Scotland, to develop and operate quality assurance and enhancement arrangements that reflect the needs of higher education in Scotland.</p> <p>SPA – Supporting Professionalism in Admissions advises Scottish HEIs also.</p> <p>The Code of Practice on Admissions to higher education developed by the QAA also pertains in Scotland.: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-10.aspx</p>
4	Application process	<p>How do students select a course?</p> <p>Note: When applying, applicants in Scotland apply to a college or degree programme rather than to a specialised course.</p> <p>Summary: (See UK report for details)</p> <p>UCAS provides an online search tool http://www.ucas.com/students/coursesearch/</p> <p>HEIs provide Entry Profiles and set entry requirements</p> <p>Applicants can make up to five choices for courses and there is no preference order (only four for some courses e.g. medicine).</p>



		<p>How do students apply?</p> <p>Using the online application system ('Apply') applicants provide (i) Personal details, (ii) Additional information (UK applicants only) (iii) Student finance (UK applicants only) (iv) Choices (v) Education (vi) Employment (vii) Personal statement (viii) Reference.</p> <p>For some courses the Personal Statement may be used as the basis for an interview.</p> <p>Other information</p> <p>Universities and colleges may make use of 'contextual data', as well as an applicant's information, when considering an application.</p> <p>Admission tests</p> <p>Admissions test and/or interviews are required for some programmes.</p>
5	Admissions process – Role of UCAS	<p>What is the role of UCAS in this part of the process?</p> <p>See UK report for details.</p>
6	Admissions process –role of the HEI	<p>Case Study: Undergraduate Admissions in the University of Glasgow</p> <p>Admissions processes for entry to undergraduate programmes are centralised within the university's own Admissions Office (except in the case of programmes in professional areas such as medicine, veterinary, dentistry, law, education – to whom admissions is devolved). An admission policy and practices are established by a centralised team and are also followed by devolved teams in the professional disciplines.</p> <p>Scale of undergraduate admissions (approx):</p> <p>4,000 undergraduate students admitted each year.</p> <p>3,000 dealt with in a centralised Admissions Office (by a team of four for undergraduate admissions)</p> <p>30,000 applications for 3,000 undergraduate places (10:1 ratio)</p> <p>800 admissions devolved to professional schools.</p> <p>The numbers of available places set (per programme or college or university) are negotiated between the Scottish Funding Council and the institution.</p>



7 Entry requirements

How are entry requirements set?

Entry requirements are set and published, in advance, using analysed and modelled data to determine minimum and maximum entry levels. The University expresses entry requirements in terms of SQA Highers achieved at particular grades for entry into a certain **College**. Where appropriate, specific grades may be required in certain subjects.

The admissions system is based on **grades** not points. A Higher grade has the same value in any subject e.g. an A grade in Photography Higher and A grade in Physics Higher are equivalent. Some courses (e.g. engineering) may require certain subjects within the 4 Highers – these are pre-requisites however and do not attract 'bonus points! Where previously, a points system was in use (A= 3, B=2, C=1) with points accumulated for the purpose of comparing grades, this practice has been discontinued in favour of assessment of grades.

Maximum grades: Level of achievement at which an applicant is guaranteed an immediate unconditional offer e.g. AAAA

Minimum grades: Level of achievement at which an applicant may be considered for an unconditional (or conditional) offer e.g. AABB (perhaps with minimum grades in certain subjects), once other offers are made.

Below the minimum level, applicants are automatically rejected by the institution.

Advanced Highers may be taken into consideration for admission purposes. The University normally regards a Grade B at Advanced Higher to be equivalent to a Higher at A. For entry requirements, equivalent grades (e.g. for English A-levels and the International Baccalaureate) are indicated and applicants are directed to a website for information on alternative qualifications.

Example:

Entry Requirements for Civil Engineering B.Eng.

Highers: AABB in first sitting including Mathematics and Physics – Unconditional Offer

Applicants who achieved between BBB and AABB may receive a conditional or unconditional offer once all applicants have been reviewed. Conditional offers will include the requirement of BA or AB in Mathematics and Physics.

A levels: AAB including Mathematics and Physics

IB: 34 points including 5 in HL Mathematics and HL Physics.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/civilengineering/>



	<p>Entrance requirements are based on 4 Highers only, to avoid discrimination in favour of applicants attending schools that offer them the option of taking more Highers. Schools or students specialising in 4 Highers may even have an advantage over those that offer more subjects. Students coming after 5th year are generally less mature than those who take Advanced Highers. Students are encouraged to take Advanced Highers in the subject they plan to study, even if it does not feature in the selection process.</p>
<p>8 Making offers</p>	<p>How are decisions made?</p> <p>Applications for entry to undergraduate programmes (other than for the professions) are assessed solely by the staff in the Admissions Office. They have access to the data submitted through UCAS and to the applicants' scores on examinations (provided by the SOA).</p> <p>The decision to make an offer is based almost exclusively on academic performance. Interviews are not used (other than for professional programmes). Personal statements do not feature in the decisions for those who meet maximum entry criteria. The Undergraduate Admissions Team (processing 30,000 applications) does not generally consider 'contextual data' for undergraduate entry. Extraneous issues (i.e. bereavement or illness) may be considered where applicants have not met requirements.</p> <p>Potential outcomes of the process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unconditional offer: Where an applicant already has academic qualifications that meet requirements 2. Conditional offer: Where an applicant has not already gained the necessary passes for entry to their chosen subject. The University will look at the qualifications they are taking and may make an offer based on these, in line with published entry qualifications 3. Applicant may be advised that an offer cannot be made. If this is the case, they will advise on what to do to make a subsequent, successful application. <p>These decisions are relayed to UCAS who in turn informs the applicant.</p> <p>In professional areas e.g. Medicine and Dentistry, there is a separate admission test, and interviews and personal statements are important. These different processes provide some flexibility and allow students with the same grades to be differentiated on the basis of aptitude tests, interviews or personal statements.</p>



9	Dealing with oversubscribed programmes	<p>The 'Gathered Field' is those applicants who exceed the minimum grades but achieved less than the maximum grades. The Admissions Office review the number of applications, results and acceptances before making offers to those on the 'waiting list'. The University sees preferences for their courses only, thus making decisions blind to wherever else applicants have applied to. Hence it is quite a gamble in terms of how many offers to make. The Gathered Field methodology offers the Admissions Office some flexibility and enables the university to avoid contractual commitments in terms of offers. Maximum requirements (involving automatic offers) are set relatively high to provide this flexibility.</p> <p>Admission for centralised admissions is based on grades alone and does not have the degree of refinement that 'points' offer, hence the possibility of over- and under-shooting the offers. The entry tariff for Social Science, for example, is AAAA (for an unconditional offer) but to be considered you can have AABB (minimum entry requirement). If there are more applicants than places with AABB then at that stage Personal Statements might be considered to make refined judgments on the margins. The process of assessing Personal Statements is fully delegated to the Undergraduate Admission Team and academic staff do not have a role (other than in Law and Education). A close working relationship is maintained with the faculty, to establish criteria and to provide a pro forma for evaluating evidence in undergraduate applications (90% of postgraduate admissions decisions, including on Personal Statements, are also made by the Admissions Office staff).</p> <p>What can an applicant expect to receive from UCAS?</p> <p>Applicants receive standard communications from UCAS via 'Track', the web-based tracking system for applications.</p>
10	Other details	<p>Widening participation in the university is dealt with outside the standard admission process. In schools where progress to higher education is less than 22% the requisite grades are dropped by two grades in two subjects. This is based on independent data on progression rates in public schools in Scotland. To encourage students from disadvantaged areas a lower tariff is set and a second chance is offered by attending summer schools. This informal and internal strategy is used rather than an examination of the contextual data gathered as part of the UCAS process.</p> <p>Scotland: Review of widening access to HE: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-11/SB11-07.pdf</p>



Sources and websites for further details:

Scottish Qualifications Authority http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/CCC_FirstPage.jsp

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework <http://www.scqf.org.uk>

Qualifications http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/ConnectingwithSQABrochureScot.pdf

Supporting Professionalism in Admissions <http://www.spa.ac.uk/index.html>

Framework for qualifications of higher education Scotland <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/ScotlandFrameworksQualsJan01HTML.aspx>

Learning and Teaching in Scotland <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/index.asp>

Study in Scotland <http://www.educationuk.org/scotland>

Scottish Colleges <http://www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk/Welcome.html>

Widening access and admissions
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-11/SB11-07.pdf>

Acronyms



HEI	Higher education institution	All
IB	International Baccalaureate	All
CABP	Central Applications and Placement	NL
DUO	Ministry for Education, Culture and Science	NL
HAVO	Secondary general education	NL
MBO	<i>Middle-management or specialist training certificate</i>	NL
RU	Research Universities	NL
UAS	Universities of Applied Science	NL
VMBO	Pre-vocational secondary education Author biographies	NL
VWO	Pre-university education	NL
ACPET	Australian Council for Private Education and Training	NSW
ACT	Australian Capital Territory	NSW
ACTAC	Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres	NSW
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework	NSW
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank	NSW
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency	NSW
COPHE	Council of Private Higher Education Inc.	NSW
CSP	Commonwealth Supported Place	NSW
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	NSW
DFEE	Domestic Fee – paying course	NSW
HSC	Higher School Certificate	NSW
NSW	New South Wales, Australia	NSW
TAFE	Technical and Further Education	NSW
TEQSA	Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency	NSW
UAC	Universities Admissions Centre	NSW
UAI	Universities Admissions Index	NSW
VET	Vocational Education and Training	NSW
ACS	Attestation of College Studies	Quebec
AVS	Attestation of Vocational Specialization	Quebec
CERPUQ	Conférence des Recteurs et Principaux des Universités du Québec	Quebec
CRC	<i>Côte de rendement collegial</i> – known as R score	Quebec
DEC	<i>Diploma d'études collegiales</i>	Quebec
DVS	Diploma in Vocational Studies	Quebec
ISG	Indicator of Strength of the Group	Quebec
MELS	Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport	Quebec
SSD	Secondary School Diploma	Quebec
VTE	Vocational and Technical Education	Quebec
SFC	Scottish Funding Council	Scotland



ACT	American College Testing Program Inc., called the ACT	Texas
AI	Academic Index	Texas
AP	Advanced Placement	Texas
CCRS	College and Career Readiness Standards	Texas
CEEB	College Entrance Examination Board	Texas
CLEP	College Level Entrance Program	Texas
DAP	Distinguished Achievement Program	Texas
EOC	End of course	Texas
GED	General Education Development	Texas
NMSQT	National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test	Texas
PI	Personal Achievement Index	Texas
PSAT	Preliminary SAT test	Texas
RHSP	Recommended High School Program	Texas
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test /SAT Reasoning Test	Texas
TAKS	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills	Texas
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills	Texas
THEA	Texas Higher Education Assessment	Texas
THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board	Texas
TSI	Texas Success Initiative	Texas
UT-Austin	University of Texas at Austin	Texas
FEC	Further Education Colleges	UK
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualification	UK
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education	UK
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council of England	UK
NOF	National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and NI.	UK
Ofqual	The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations	UK
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education	UK
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework	UK
SPA	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions	UK
UCAS	University Central Admissions System	UK

*For the purpose of this list of acronyms, 'UK' is taken as England, Wales and Northern Ireland