



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Queen Margaret University Contextual Admissions Policy

1 Introduction

Queen Margaret University is fully committed to the provision of equality of opportunity within the admissions process. We recognise that applicants may have received different levels of support, guidance and educational opportunity prior to applying for higher education.

Although academic attainment is an important factor in assessing applications, we consider a range of factors when making admissions decisions. Each application received by the University is considered carefully on its own merits. This Contextual Admissions Policy aims to take into account the context of an applicant's academic achievement, giving consideration to a range of factors which may impact on attainment.

2 Admissions Principles

The University is committed to equality of opportunity. We seek to promote diversity amongst our students, staff and applicants. We recognise the particular contributions that are made by individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, to the achievement of our vision and strategic objectives. We aim to promote entry to a diverse range of students, whatever their background.

The University seeks to provide access to its courses from as wide a range of entrants as possible, subject to the essential principle that entrants have a reasonable expectation of completing their course successfully within the normal duration of the course.

3 Use of contextual data in admissions

We aim to take account of the context of an applicant's academic achievements, giving consideration to a range of factors which may impact on attainment. These factors include but are not limited to:

1. Care experience
2. Students eligible for the Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS)
3. Applying via a Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) route
4. Attendance at a school where few students progress to University - Schools for Higher Education (SHEP) schools
5. Living in an area of high deprivation, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

4 Data sources

To consider the context of an application, we use data from a range of sources including; the Scottish Government, UCAS, partner widening participation programmes, and the information given in the application itself.

- If an applicant has spent time in care, this should be identified by the applicant in the UCAS application. We strongly encourage applicants who have spent time in care to declare this as part of their application.

An applicant with care experience is someone under the age of 25 who has spent time in local authority care, either in residential accommodation, foster care or under supervision orders at home, for a period of at least 13 weeks. Care leavers have ceased to be looked after by a local authority on or after their sixteenth birthday.¹

- LEAPS is a widening participation programme, funded by higher education institutions and local council partners, to increase progression to higher education in South East Scotland. LEAPS offers different levels of support to students, based on individual eligibility and whether their school is classified as LEAPS Group 1+, LEAPS Group 1, or LEAPS Group 2. Applicants who have participated in the LEAPS programme will be identified from the information they provide in their UCAS application. See the LEAPS website for further information: www.leapsonline.org/about
- SWAP Access Programmes are one year, full-time courses run at colleges across Scotland, designed for mature students who are returning to education after a gap. Applicants who have studied a SWAP Access Programme will be identified from the course information provided in their UCAS application.
- The Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) is funded by the Scottish Funding Council and provides support in 19 schools across the South East of Scotland, that traditionally have low progression rates to higher education. Applicants who have studied at a SHEP school will be identified through their UCAS application.
- The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Government's official tool for identifying those places in Scotland suffering from deprivation. Applicants living in an area of high deprivation, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) will be identified through the home postcode given in their application.

5 Offer making

Admissions decisions are made on an individual basis. Offers made to contextual applicants will normally be made at the minimum entry requirements for the relevant programme of study.

All applicants are expected to show interest in the subject area and evidence of motivation to study the course applied for, demonstrated in the personal statement.

5.1 Care experienced applicants

The University recognises that care experienced applicants may face additional barriers when applying to higher education and is committed to increasing the number of applications from those who have spent time in care.

We guarantee to make an offer of admission, or an offer of an interview or audition, to any care leaver who has the potential to meet our entry requirements for their chosen programme of study.

¹ Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

5.2 LEAPS / SWAP / SHEP

The University is a partner in LEAPS, SHEP and SWAP. We have agreed to give priority to applicants from each of these schemes and wherever possible to make an offer of admissions, or an offer of an interview or audition, to applicants who have the potential to meet our entry requirements for their chosen programme of study.

5.3 SIMD20

Where possible, we will make an offer of admission, or an offer of an interview or audition, to Scottish domiciled students who are identified as living in an area of high deprivation, particularly those living within the 20% (SIMD20) most deprived areas in Scotland.

6 Alternative routes to Higher Education

The University welcomes applications from students studying a broad range of qualifications. We have established articulation agreements with local colleges for applicants wishing to apply for advanced entry with HNC and HND qualifications.

If an applicant does not have the minimum entry requirements, but has relevant experience and can demonstrate that there is a reasonable expectation that they will complete the course, then it may still be possible to consider them. Mature applicants who have no formal qualifications or have been out of formal education for some time are strongly encouraged to contact our Outreach and Community Engagement team to discuss appropriate pathways to study: oce@qmu.ac.uk

6.1 Academies

The Academies project is a partnership led by Edinburgh College which presents S5-S6 pupils with skills development and careers opportunities. Students can take part in a variety of classes at Edinburgh College and Queen Margaret University; go on industry visits and gain a qualification which can help them progress to college, university or work. Academies exist in:

- Hospitality and Tourism
- Creative Industries
- Health and Social Care

Applicants who have attended one of our Academies should apply to the University through UCAS and we encourage applicants to mention their participation in the academy programme in their personal statement.

We guarantee to make an offer of admission to applicants who have studied on the Hospitality and Tourism, and Creative Industries academies who apply for a related programme and have the potential to meet our entry requirements. We also guarantee an offer of admission to Health and Social Care academy applicants, applying for the BSc (Hons) Physical Activity, Health and Wellbeing course who meet our minimum entry criteria.

We guarantee an interview for all Health and Social Care Academy applicants that apply for an Allied Health programme and have the potential to meet the entry requirements for the programme.

Academy applicants who have completed the National Progression Award are eligible to receive an offer of admission into level 1 of a related programme.

Academy applicants who have completed an HNC with B or above in the graded unit are eligible to receive an offer of admission into level 2 of a related programme.

For more information contact schools@edinburghcollege.ac.uk

7 Confirmation of exam results

Upon confirmation of SQA exam results, final admissions decisions will be taken on an individual basis, taking into account any contextual factors alongside the qualifications and grades achieved by an applicant.

8 Support for applicants

The University offers a wide range of services to support our students with the transition to university study. Full details can be found on the student services page on our website. Services include:

- The Effective Learning Service (ELS), which offers free, confidential support and advice on study skills
- The Disability Service provides advice, guidance and support to students throughout their studies
- QMConnect offers new students the opportunity to be matched with a trained student mentor for 1:1 support

The University recognises that care leavers may require additional advice and support during the pre and post entry transition period. All applicants who have been identified as care leavers, who receive an offer of admission from QMU will be offered additional support from our Student Funding Advisor, who will guide them to the support available across the University studentfunding@qmu.ac.uk

9 Policy review

The Contextual Admissions Policy is approved by the Student Experience Committee and any changes or updates will be approved by that committee. The Head of Admissions and Recruitment is responsible for the operation of the policy and for its regular monitoring and review. The policy will be reviewed annually. The University will monitor the outcomes of students admitted to study on the basis of contextual factors, and this information will be used to develop future policy.

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Sarah Bailey, Head of Admissions and Recruitment