



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. We consider you to be a widening access student if you:

1. are care experienced;
2. are eligible for the Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS);
3. live in a target postcode area which identifies you as living in an area of high deprivation (most deprived 20% in Scotland) 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
- 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.²

5 Minimum offer requirements

Admissions decisions are made on an individual basis. We aim to identify each applicant's full talent and potential and look beyond grades to do this. 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

The qualifications and grades an applicant requires will vary by course and may also depend on whether they are a widening access student. Where a widening access student is eligible to be made an offer of admission for level 1 of a programme, this will be at the level of the 'minimum' Scottish Higher entry requirements. Entry requirements are published on the individual course pages on our website and within our prospectus

In addition, the University guarantees to make an offer of admission, or an offer of an interview or audition, to any care experienced student or any student from a LEAPS Group 1+ school, who has the potential to meet the 'minimum' entry requirements for their chosen programme.

In addition to the widening access groups detailed in this policy, the University also welcomes applications from student carers, estranged students and from students who have attended a school where few students progress to University - Schools for Higher Education (SHEP) schools. These applications will be considered individually and offers may be made at the 'minimum' level where appropriate.

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.

1. ¹ Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

2. ² <http://simd.scot/2016>

We also welcome applications from students that have studied a Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) programme at one of Scotland's colleges.

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 Widening Participation and Outreach team to discuss appropriate pathways to study: wpo@qmu.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 Head of Widening Participation and Outreach who will guide them to the support available across the University cmaguire@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.