



north west
regional college
Derry-Londonderry • Limavady • Strabane

NWRC ADMISSIONS AND ENROLMENTS POLICY

Full-time and Part-time Applicants

Author/Responsibility	Document Version	Date Reviewed	Next Review Due
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Approved at LMT on	22 May 2023		

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Policy Aim.....	2
3	Scope.....	3
4	College Commitment	3
4.1	A Commitment to Equality and Diversity.....	3
4.2	A Commitment to open, transparent, fair and impartial procedures	4
4.3	A Commitment to a professional admissions service.....	4
4.4	A Commitment to student success by striving to place each applicant on the most appropriate course.....	4
4.5	A Commitment to risk assessment during the admissions process.....	5
5	Entry Criteria	5
6	Pre-Entry Advice Sessions, Interviews and Information Sessions.....	5
7	Admissions Framework.....	6
7.1	Admissions stages	6
7.2	Part Time Enrolment Process.....	7
7.3	Higher Level Apprenticeship	8
7.4	Declaration of Previous / Current Convictions	8
7.5	Additional Learning Support	9
7.6	International Students Applications (Non ROI / UK).....	9
8	Selection Criteria.....	10
8.1	Further Education Entry Criteria	10
8.2	Work Based Learning – Entry Level / Level 1	10
8.3	Traineeships	11
8.4	Higher Education Entry Criteria	12
9	Selection Process	13
10	Timescales.....	14
11	Appeals Process	14
12	Quality Control.....	14
	Appendix 1	15

1 Introduction

The North West Regional College (NWRC) has been at the heart of life in the North West of Northern Ireland for more than 100 years. Across the passing of time it has stood as an important institution renowned for delivering an extensive range of learning and career opportunities to thousands of learners. NWRC is delivering an invigorated brand of education and training aimed at attracting new learners, while advancing the growth and prosperity of the local economy.

The College has main campuses in Derry-Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane, and supports over 11,000 student enrolments each year. Learners can undertake full-time or part-time study programmes in a range of vocational or non-vocational areas. It has 4 academic departments, each catering for school leavers, mature students, professionals, community organisations, and the unemployed. These are: Business and Professional Services; Health, Sport and Science; Technology and Creative Industries; and Training and Skills.

The Admissions Department deal specifically with the admission of full-time, part-time and international applicants for all Further Education, Higher Education and Work Based Learning courses. The College's policies and procedures exist to ensure fair and consistent selection.

The College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This Policy should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the aforementioned legislation. The College also complies with the Consumer Protection Law (CPL) for Higher Education Courses.

The College will provide this Policy in alternative formats on request where reasonably practicable, eg, Braille, Large Print, Audio formats, etc, and/or alternative language.

2 Policy Aim

The aim of this Policy is to provide an admissions framework which ensures applicants access the course most suitable to them, and to ensure that applicants are treated solely on the basis of their merits, ability and potential, thereby providing a fair and equitable process for all.

The College aims to provide comprehensive, accurate, user-friendly information and advice to applicants in the admissions process. This is to enable an informed choice of course to be made appropriate to their interests, academic qualifications and potential.

Detailed course information and specific entry criteria is provided on the following platforms:

- Printed and Online College Prospectus
- College Website
- Social Media
- School leaflets (prepared within each Department)

Details of academic qualifications and equivalences are listed in the College Prospectus and on the College Website for reference purposes.

This Policy should be used and understood in conjunction with the following documents:

- Fees and Charges Policy

- Policy on the Disclosure of Criminal History
- Learning Support Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- College Terms and Conditions
- Course changes, Suspension and Closure Policy
- Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning APEL

3 Scope

This Policy provides guidance on the selection criteria and processes to be adopted in the selection and admission of candidates for places on full-time higher education and further education courses within the North West Regional College, and includes applicants who are already studying at the College and who want to further progress their education.

Applications may relate to the below areas:

- Further Education
- Higher Education
- Higher Level Apprenticeship
- Apprenticeship NI
- Traineeship
- Work-based Learning – Skills for Life and Work
- Princes Trust
- Community Group courses

4 College Commitment

The North West Regional College is committed to equality of opportunity to all applicants and potential students acknowledging the need to respect diversity and cultural differences. The Admissions and Enrolments Policy will be open and transparent and provide fair and equitable procedures delivered within a professional structure. The College aims to ensure applicants access the course most suitable to them, taking into account all relevant information which may include Health and Safety considerations.

4.1 A Commitment to Equality and Diversity

It is College Policy to provide access to all, irrespective of gender (including transgender), marital or civil partnership status, having or not having dependants, religious belief /community background or political opinion, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller), disability, sexual orientation, and age.

North West Regional College recognises that there can be differences between physical sex and gender identity/expression. The College will at no time discriminate against people on the grounds of their gender identity/expression, including their transgender status.

Trans students are welcome at the College and we will ensure that the environment is supportive and safe. For further details on the support the College will provide can be [accessed here](#).

The College is opposed to all forms of unlawful discrimination. All applicants will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against during the admissions process on any of the above grounds.

Decisions about eligibility for a course will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination. Whilst implementing selection processes, course teams will be mindful of College Policy on equality of opportunity and will not discriminate against any individual or group.

In seeking to attract applications from learners, NWRC is committed to widening participation and to promoting wider access to Further and Higher Education.

4.2 A Commitment to open, transparent, fair and impartial procedures

Entry criteria and pre-requisites will be published in the College's Prospectus, on the website and in other relevant publicity materials. Applicants will receive timely information on the progress of their application and any other necessary guidance documentation required (**See Appendix 1 for timescales**). Applicants may be required to attend a Pre-Entry Advice Session / Interview or an Information Session as part of the entry criteria for the course. Successful applicants who meet the course criteria will receive a Firm/ Unconditional Offer. Unsuccessful applicants who do not meet the course criteria will receive correspondence and will be signposted to our College Careers Academy for additional impartial advice and guidance on alternative courses that are available.

Applicants with additional learning needs or disabilities will have their needs assessed by our Learning Link Team so appropriate support can be provided throughout the application process, if required, as well as when the applicant receives an offer (assessment of need), and becomes enrolled as a student.

4.3 A Commitment to a professional admissions service

The College will strive to provide a professional service to applicants and are supported by the necessary structures, resources and training. Whilst curriculum staff will be involved in this service, the core admissions processes will be organised centrally. Student feedback will be regularly obtained to help improve this service.

4.4 A Commitment to student success by striving to place each applicant on the most appropriate course

College entry criteria and courses/subjects/modules will be set in consideration of the standards required by applicants to be successful in their area of choice. However, it should be noted that additional entry criteria may be set at course level if the anticipated number of applicants exceeds the number of places available. Only courses with viable numbers can run. If a course is cancelled due to insufficient applicant numbers, applicants will be signposted to our Careers Academy for advice on alternative courses.

Impartial careers and course guidance will be available to applicants. Initial assessment of learning needs will be undertaken by the Learning Link Team. Further information will be given during the initial induction period. Throughout the duration of the course, but particularly during the first six week period, every effort will be made to help ensure that students have been enrolled on the course most appropriate to them and arrangements made to guide those who are not.

4.5 A Commitment to risk assessment during the admissions process

College staff must also be mindful of legal obligations under Safeguarding Legislation, Data Protection and Health and Safety. Health and Safety risk assessments must be completed in certain cases to determine if there is a potential risk to the prospective student, other students, College staff or to the public. This includes potential risk to children and vulnerable adults.

The College may have to implement reasonable adjustments in respect of study arrangements during unforeseen circumstances, for example, a pandemic. Applicants will be notified of any such changes and the reasons for the changes in line with the Consumer Rights Act 2015. For further information please view the College's Terms & Conditions: www.nwrc.ac.uk/terms.

All applicants to programmes that include placement and involve interaction with children or vulnerable groups will undergo an enhanced Access NI (ANI) check (or suitable alternative in the case of international students) to be carried out, in accordance with the Access NI's Code of Practice available online at: www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni. The student's 'Fitness to Practice' may also be considered specifically where placement is a key component of the course.

5 Entry Criteria

Applicants must be 16 years of age or over, on or before 1st July, in the year of entry. Academic entry criteria will be set by the Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards. Additional criteria and course/subject/module pre-requisites are set by Heads of Departments subject to approval by the Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards and to any requirements of awarding bodies.

For Higher Education (HE) courses, the College acknowledges that some applicants may be admitted through an APEL procedure and that the College adheres to NI Colleges and Universities APEL Good Practice Guidelines, which particularly applies to Foundation Degrees (additional information detailed in Section 8.3)

Entry criteria for some courses may be enhanced where courses are oversubscribed.

6 Pre-Entry Advice Sessions, Interviews and Information Sessions

The Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards in consultation with the Heads of Departments will agree which courses require a Pre-Entry Advice Session, Interview or an Information Session. The Head of Department will be responsible for the content, style and timing of the Pre-Entry Advice Session, Interview or Information Session. These will be conducted in a professional manner using objective criteria and outcomes will be non-discriminatory.

The Head of Department will work collaboratively with the Admissions team to identify a Pre-Entry Advice Session, Interview or Information Session calendar for their Department each year once the

prospectus becomes available, providing dates for each month from January to the following September.

7 Admissions Framework

Following submission of an online or hardcopy Application Form to the College there are a number of stages involved in the application process which are outlined below. These stages may vary depending on the course:

7.1 Admissions stages

i. Acknowledgment

Applicants who apply online will receive an automatic acknowledgement via email from admissions.

Applicants who submit a hard copy application will receive an acknowledgment via email* within two working days of receipt.

*applicants who request correspondence by letter will receive all correspondence via post. If no Pre-Entry Advice Session (PEAS), Interview or Information Session is required for the course, a Conditional Offer correspondence will be sent within 3 working days of the acknowledgement.

ii. Pre-Entry Advice Session (PEAS), Interview, Information Session (if applicable)

Applicants will be invited, by email, to attend a PEAS, interview or information session within 5 working days of receipt of application, subject to the interview calendar being available from the Heads of Departments.

Information Sessions may be mandatory or non-mandatory, depending on the course. If applicants cannot attend the first mandatory session, they will be given an alternative session date. Failure to attend a mandatory information session on two occasions may result in the application being withdrawn, unless the applicant has contacted Admissions. Applicants will be informed of this throughout the application process and will be sent reminders accordingly.

iii. Conditional Offer made

Upon receipt of the outcome of the PEAS, Interview or Information session (if applicable) a conditional offer will be sent within 3 working days, via email, to the applicant detailing the entry requirements for the course and requesting that results are uploaded to the applicant's online account, or handed/ posted into the College Admissions Team.

If required to attend an Information Session at the conditional offer stage, applicants will be notified of this within the conditional offer correspondence.

Applications may be considered from 1 December each year, or as soon as the course prospectus is available, with Pre-Entry Advice Session, Interview or Information Session beginning the following month.

iv. Firm/ Unconditional Offer made

Upon receipt of an applicant's required results, a Firm / Unconditional offer correspondence is sent to the applicant within 3 working days, confirming the start date for the course. At this

stage, applicants are advised to log into their NWRC application account and accept their place. Alternatively they can email admissions@nwrc.ac.uk.

If an applicant provides or uploads copies of their qualifications with their Application and they meet the criteria for the course, a Firm / Unconditional offer will be made within 3 working days. Applicants will also be asked to provide photographic ID.

v. Acceptance

When the applicant accepts their place, the College's admission's system will be updated accordingly within 2 working days.

vi. Course Change/Location

If there are any changes between the offer being issued and the commencement of a Course, these changes will be communicated to applicants at the earliest opportunity outlining the changes as well as other options that may be available. This is in line with the Course Changes, Suspension and Closure Policy.

vii. Deferral

A student may defer their place on a course until the following academic year. The student must put a request in writing that will then be passed to the Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards for approval. The student will then be contacted at the start of the Admission Process for the following academic year to find out if they are still interested in taking up their place.

viii. Unsuccessful/Careers Letter

If an applicant does not have the required qualifications for the course an Unsuccessful/Careers correspondence will be issued within 3 working days from receipt of application (excluding mature students (over 19 years of age) who may go through the APEL process, see section 8.3). Additionally an Unsuccessful/Careers correspondence will be sent to an applicant when following a conditional offer, they fail to achieve the qualifications required for the course. This is also issued within 3 working days from receipt of qualifications. Unsuccessful/Careers correspondence provides details of our Careers Academy who will guide and support applicants in making an alternative choice.

ix. Referred to another course ("Next Choice Letter")

Applicants who have been unsuccessful in their first choice course, and have stated a second choice in their application form, will be advised that they have been referred to their second choice course. If no second choice has been submitted, the applicant will be advised to contact the Admissions Office or the Careers Academy.

7.2 Part Time Enrolment Process

Applicants who are applying/enrolling for part-time courses that do not require a Pre-Entry Advice Session / interview or information session will be required to make a payment of fees at the time of application/enrolment, or within 5 working days. This includes online telephone or in-person payments. Fees are set out within the parttime Prospectus as well as the College website. Fees are applied in line with the Fees and Charges Policy. Fees not paid at the time of enrolment or within 5 working days may result in the application / enrolment being withdrawn.

Applicants who are applying for part-time courses that do require Pre-Entry Advice Session / interviews or information sessions will follow through the same process as the Admissions Framework outlined above. Once a student has accepted their place on the course, they will be required to pay the deposit and/ or necessary fees as publicised in the Part-time Prospectus/ College website before becoming enrolled as a student at the College. Applicants who do not make the necessary payments may be withdrawn from the course.

(Admissions Process Flowchart - See Appendix 1)

7.3 Higher Level Apprenticeship

A Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) is a unique work-based programme which enables participants to earn while they learn and gain a nationally recognised professional qualification (HNC, HND, Level 5 Diploma or Foundation Degree). Successful candidates will be employed in a company relevant to their chosen profession to gain valuable industry experience. This experience will feature a close mentoring relationship and academic support provided by North West Regional College as they progress through the relevant higher level qualification.

Applicants can apply online via the College website for their chosen HLA. The entry criteria will be set out by the Head of Department for each HLA course and this information will be provided to the HLA Skills Development Officer. Applicants will be asked to upload a CV (and personal statement for Accountancy) along with their completed online application. The HLA Skills Development Officer will circulate CVs and support employers to set up interviews with applicants. The HLA Skills Development Officer will inform successful applicants and these applicants will be given an offer letter confirming details of the course.

The places on the Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes are very competitive as they are limited. Successful applications to these programmes will be subject to fulfilling the following conditions:

- ✓ Meeting the course criteria as set out on the HLA prospectus and on the College website
- ✓ Being successful at interview stage with an employer relevant to their programme of study
- ✓ Gaining employment (at least 21 hours a week) with an approved employer relevant to their programme of study

If at any stage throughout the process the HLA applicant is not successful in meeting the criteria as set out, the College will signpost applicants via the NWRC Careers Academy to other options that may be available.

Applicants to the HLA programmes will have their information shared with employers. Details of this will be provided on a Privacy Notice on the online application, which is specific for HLA applicants.

7.4 Declaration of Previous / Current Convictions

Applicants who declare that they have any previous or current convictions will be required to meet with the College's designated Safeguarding Officer to undergo a Safeguarding Assessment as per the NWRC Policy on the Disclosure of Criminal History.

An automatic trigger has been set up online for all applicants, which will notify the Safeguarding Officer that an applicant has ticked 'YES' to one or both of the Safeguarding questions. The Safeguarding Officer will contact the applicant to invite them into the College to complete a Safeguarding Assessment. The applicant will also receive an email notification informing them that

they must complete the Safeguarding Assessment with the Safeguarding Officer for their application to continue.

All full-time or part-time applicants who tick 'YES' to one or both Safeguarding questions will have their application status set to '**HELDS**' on the system until official notification from the Safeguarding Officer allows their application to proceed.

7.5 Additional Learning Support

Applicants can declare whether they have a disability or long-term health condition at application stage. Applicants who declare a need will be contacted by our Learning Link Team who will request evidence of the applicant's condition. Applicants will be invited for an 'Assessment of Need' so that necessary support arrangements and reasonable adjustments can be explored.

7.6 International Students Applications (Non ROI / UK)

The College welcomes applications from International Students. The College can accept applications from International students via the UKVI Student Sponsor Licence for full-time courses **ONLY**. Applicants must complete an International Application Form available on the College website.

The College requires International applicants, for whom English is not their first language, to provide a copy of their English Language test result. The entry requirement is IELTS Certificate 5.5 for FE courses and IELTS 6.0 for HE courses. The applicant must meet the entry requirements for the specific course and international examination results will be assessed based on equivalencies using NARIC. Applicants must also meet the NWRC/UKVI regulations, which are set out on the College website.

Applications can be taken from International students for part-time courses if they already meet the UKVI residency requirements, evidence must be provided.

International applicants will not gain entry into the UK on a Student Sponsor Licence if applying for a part-time course.

Applicants from Republic of Ireland, in which country of birth is different, will be subject to additional residency checks at the time of the application / enrolment.

8 Selection Criteria

8.1 Further Education Entry Criteria

The College's minimum entry criteria for admission to Full-time and Part-time Further Education courses are as follows:

Level 1	No formal entry requirements.
Level 2	Minimum of 4 GCSE grades D-G or above or GCSE grading structure 3-1. Minimum of 4 Ordinary Leaving Certificates at Grade O6 or above Depending on the course – may require English and Maths or Art etc. To be determined by Department.
Level 3	4 GCSE's Grade C or above or GCSE grading structure 4-9. 4 Ordinary Leaving Certificate Passes Grade O5 or above Depending on the course - may require English and Maths or Art etc. To be determined by Department.

Applicants will be required to provide appropriate evidence of English Language, Maths and ICT qualifications during the application stage, even if this is not a specific requirement as outlined within the course entry criteria*. If appropriate evidence is not provided, students will be required to undertake an assessment in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT (where applicable) to determine the appropriate class in these areas that students should be enrolled on, alongside their main vocational programme. This is to help students succeed in their chosen vocational programme and enable employment and / or progression opportunities on completion of their course.

*** If English Language or Maths or ICT are a specific requirement of the course criteria, applicants will not be guaranteed entry onto the programme unless appropriate evidence is provided.**

Queries relating to individual students will be referred to the relevant Curriculum Manager to make a decision. Students who have been out of school for 2 years who do not hold the above may be considered for entry.

An Aptitude Test and/or Interview may be required to gain entry onto some courses.

Applicants for whom English is a second language may be asked to complete an assessment of their reading, writing and comprehension as a condition of entry onto non-ESOL courses. IELTS Certificate 5.5 is required to be admitted to Level 3 Courses when English is not the first Language.

8.2 Work Based Learning – Entry Level / Level 1

There are no formal entry requirements for Entry Level / Level 1 work based learning programmes.

8.3 Traineeships

Entry criteria for Traineeships is as follows:

Applicants will be required to hold a minimum of a Level 1 qualification, defined as 4 GCSEs at grades D-G including Maths and English grades D-F, or equivalent. However, most areas will require higher grades in Maths and English.

The enhanced entry criteria for the Traineeships is shown below:

Professional / Technical area	GCSE Maths Grade	GCSE English Grade
Brickwork	D	E
Carpentry and Joinery	D	E
Engineering (Fab and Welding)	D	D
Light Vehicle Body Repair	E	E
Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	D	E
Painting and Decorating	E	E
Professional Chef	E	E
Retail	E	E
Wall and Floor Tiling	D	E
Childcare	D	D
ICT	D	D
Hairdressing	D	D

Applicants who do not meet the enhanced entry criteria will enter an Introductory Phase of the Traineeship. Upon enrolment trainees will undertake initial assessments which will confirm whether they should enter the full Traineeship or the Introductory Phase.

8.4 Higher Education Entry Criteria

The College's minimum entry criteria for admission to Full-time and Part-time Higher Education courses are as follows:

Level 4	32 UCAS points. Depending on the course – some may require specific subjects. Whilst this is the minimum criteria based on demand entry criteria can be raised and the prospectus each year will identify the level that the College anticipates applying. If demand is less than expected criteria can be lowered to the minimum.
Level 5 HND	40 UCAS points Depending on the course – some may require specific subjects. Whilst this is the minimum criteria based on demand entry criteria can be raised and the prospectus each year will identify the level that the College anticipates applying. If demand is less than expected criteria can be lowered to the minimum.
Level 5 Foundation Degree	40 UCAS points (<i>Unless otherwise stated in the Course Document</i>) Depending on the course - some may require specific subjects. Whilst this is the minimum criteria based on demand entry criteria can be raised and the prospectus each year will identify the level that the College anticipates applying. If demand is less than expected criteria can be lowered to the minimum.

Applicants will be required to provide appropriate evidence of English Language, Maths and ICT qualifications during the application stage, even if this is not a specific requirement as outlined within the course entry criteria*. If appropriate evidence is not provided, students will be required to undertake an assessment in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT (where applicable) to determine the appropriate class in these areas that students should be enrolled on, alongside their main vocational programme. This is to help students succeed in their chosen vocational programme and enable employment and / or progression opportunities on completion of their course.

*** If English Language or Maths or ICT are a specific requirement of the course criteria, applicants will not be guaranteed entry onto the programme unless appropriate evidence is provided.**

Queries relating to individual students will be referred to the relevant Curriculum Manager to make a decision. Students who have been out of school for 2 years who do not hold the above may be considered.

An Aptitude Test and/or Interview may be required to gain entry onto some courses

Applicants for whom English is a second language may be asked to complete an assessment of their reading, writing and comprehension as a condition of entry onto non-ESOL courses. IELTS Certificate 6.0 is required to be admitted to Higher Education Courses when English is not the first Language.

8.5 Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Foundation Degrees (FDs) in particular, are open to all those who have the ability to benefit from Higher Education. APEL - is a way to encourage more people who may have less in the way of formal qualifications, to consider applying for places in higher education. APEL is a process through which the learning applicants have gained from experience can be counted. Prior informal learning is learning based experience. It includes all learning which has been achieved up to this point that has not already been formally assessed. This includes prior learning gained through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as prior learning gained through community-based learning, workplace learning and training, continuing professional development and independent learning. If there is a GCSE requirement as part of the entry criteria, this must be met alongside completing an APEL application. Admissions will advise applicants on this process as and when required. Additional information can be found within the Applicant Guidelines for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning APEL.

8.6 An Aptitude Test and/or Interview may be required to gain entry onto some courses

Applicants for whom English is a second language may be asked to complete an assessment of their reading, writing and comprehension as a condition of entry onto non-ESOL courses. IELTS Certificate 6.0 is required to be admitted to HNC/HND Courses and 5.5 for FE courses when English is not the first Language.

8.7 Criteria for Selection

Where the knowledge and/or skills demands of a course or subject module require the use of pre-requisites, then these may be applied to ensure an applicant gains entry onto a course. For example, the demands of particular courses may require the inclusion of specific pre-requisites, e.g., GCSE/Leaving Cert Maths or equivalent. These are set out in the College's Full-time prospectus and other publicity documentation. Where a large number of applicants holding the entry qualifications stated in the prospectus for a course exceeds the number of places, applications will be processed in chronological order.

9 Selection Process

Applications are processed in chronological order and preference will be given to those applicants that hold or meet the entry criteria - Students who do not meet the entry requirements or who do not pass their interview will be referred to their second choice or to Careers. For mature applicants that do not meet the entry criteria, a selection process is put in place which is based on experience and relevancy to the course of study.

10 Timescales

The College Leadership and Management Team has agreed that all course teams should adhere to the application process as detailed in Appendix 1. Timescales are dependent upon a number of issues for example:

- Interview emails cannot be sent until interview dates have been provided by the Curriculum Team
- Conditional Offer/Firm / Unconditional Offer cannot be processed until information session dates have been provided by Curriculum Team
- Results must be received prior to offers being confirmed.

11 Appeals Process

Applicants who wish to appeal against the selection decision should be informed that all appeals should be made as detailed below:

Step 1

The applicant (or parent/guardian/legal carer if under 18) must put their appeal in writing to the relevant Head of Department within 10 working days of receipt of the selection decision. The Head of Department will investigate the selection decision and inform the applicant of the outcome of their appeal and the reasons for reaching this decision within 10 working days from receipt of appeal.

Step 2

If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of Step 1 then they must submit to the Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards the grounds for appeal. This must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal decision.

A meeting with the Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards, Head of Department/Course Coordinator and applicant will take place to hear the appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the grounds for appeal. The Director of Curriculum and Academic Standard's decision on the appeal will be final.

All documentation relating to the appeal will be held on file.

12 Quality Control

Student questionnaires are used to monitor the enrolment and induction process. The results will feed into the Whole College Performance and Self Evaluation Process.

Audits

Admission and Enrolment procedures are regularly audited by internal and external bodies.

Review of Admissions and Enrolments

A review is carried out annually by admission and enrolment staff and this Policy is subject to updates by Senior Management.

Complaints

Applicants have the right to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the process. All complaints are dealt with in a fair, consistent and unbiased manner. Applicants can submit a complaint as per the Customer Complaints and Compliments Policy.

Appendix 1



NWRC Admissions Process Flowchart

