

MANAGEMENT CONTROL HEADER			
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I have carried out an equality impact assessment screening to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality.			x
I have considered the impact of the Policy/Strategy/Procedure (<i>delete as appropriate</i>) on the Welsh language and Welsh language provision within the University.			x

CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS POLICY

Wrexham University is committed to widening access to university for all those with the potential to succeed, regardless of background or personal circumstances. As a result, the University places the use of contextual admissions practices as a priority when making decisions on applications to study with us. This policy will outline when and how contextual factors are taken into account when making an admissions decision, and the subsequent effects on offers when such factors are present.

What is ‘contextual admissions?’

Contextual admissions refers to the use of certain circumstances and indicators that an applicant may present in addition to their qualifications, and the subsequent tailoring of an admissions decision to take these circumstances and indicators into account.

Which factors do we take into account?

Traditionally, contextual admissions decisions are based on one or more key indicators on the UCAS application form. For example:

- If an applicant lives in an area with traditionally low progression to university
- If the applicant lives in an area of socio-economic deprivation
- Whether an applicant has been in care
- If the applicant's school or college falls below the national average for GCSE or A Level standard
- If the applicant is mature (over 21 years of age)

Our admissions processes take these factors into account, but our contextual decisions are also made based on information available on the application regarding mitigating factors that don't fit into these categories:

- What were the applicant's circumstances when they last studied? How could these circumstances have affected their performances in assessment?
- What are the applicant's circumstances now? Could these negatively affect what they're currently doing?
- As a mature student, what non-academic factors can be taken into account to strengthen an application? How have life experiences prepared them for further study?
- Does their reference indicate we should be taking an external factor into account when assessing the application?

Why are these factors important?

As a University with a high proportion of students from a Widening Access background, we acknowledge that not every applicant has had access to the same learning opportunities and support as others. We believe that this should be addressed as part of the admissions process.

How do we use the information?

Where an applicant is affected by one or more of the factors above, we may choose to do the following:

- Make a lower offer
- Offer an interview where previously this may not have been considered
- Add a preparatory course (usually studied with us) to conditions of offer
- Offer increased support via Widening Access during the application process
- Apply more flexibility to our decision at Confirmation

Making lower offers

Some universities make 'contextual offers' to those who fulfil contextual admissions criteria. These offers are traditionally 1 or 2 grades lower than a standard offer. We

do not make this type of offer as standard. Instead, our offer will still fit into our sliding scale of UCAS Tariff points for that course even if the applicant fulfils contextual criteria. An offer may be lower than another applicant receives however, if we have identified mitigating factors in the application that justify this lower-end offer.

Offering an interview

For our more competitive courses, an applicant may be rejected prior to interview if they do not fulfil standard shortlisting criteria. However, where an applicant displays one or more contextual indicators or mitigating factors, an interview may be offered instead of a rejection.

Including a preparatory course as a condition of offer

We offer a number of short courses that can form part of an applicant's offer depending on their personal circumstances. The Confident Learner for example is a popular short course that can be used as a bridge into WGU for those applicants who have been out of education for some time.

Increase support from Widening Access

Identifying mitigating factors within an application gives us the opportunity to offer the applicant the support of our Widening Access Coordinator. This can take the form of increased communication during the application process, the organisation of one-to-one discussions between the applicant and the Admissions Team/Admissions Tutor or other services which may assist an applicant who requires extra support to navigate through the application process.

Applying more flexibility at Confirmation

This is the most significant point in the cycle at which offers are reduced based on contextual factors. We will take into account an applicant's situation during their assessment periods, and any other contextual factors present in their application form at this point. We will then reduce the offer requirements for an applicant when results are known and their UCAS tariff point totals are available.

Contextual admissions at WGU in practice

In practice, any or all of the above practices can be used during an admissions cycle for individual applicants who require them. The Admissions team will advise on individual circumstances as appropriate, and applicants are encouraged to contact the team should they wish to know how their individual circumstances may affect their offer from us.