

Additional Entry Points in the Academic Year: Key Principles (Academic and Business) for Campus-Based Programmes

The Key Principles (Academic and Business) for Additional Entry points in the Academic Year for Campus-Based Programmes were approved by the University Executive on 26 February 2015 (business principles) and by the Senate on 25 March 2015 (academic principles). This Key Principles document has been updated to reflect the introduction of January and May entry points, which have become increasingly common in the post-pandemic (from 2021) period.

Key Principles

Heriot-Watt University operates on the basis of a two-semester academic year (although the academic calendar provides scope for a third teaching block for particular programmes, eg foundation provision), with a main, formal entry point in September - for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes which are delivered on campus (Edinburgh; Scottish Borders; Orkney; Dubai; Malaysia)¹. Additional entry points, such as January Semester and May Semester, may be operated, subject to the usual academic and business approvals processes, and in accordance with the Principles set out below.

Academic Principles

1. Multiple entry points in the academic year are an accepted feature of the University's operations. However, there is no expectation or requirement for Schools to offer entry to degree programmes at times other than the main formal entry point in September.
2. The offer of additional entry points in an academic year should not compromise the student learning experience, nor the quality of teaching on a programme, nor the research activity of a School.
3. Additional entry points for a programme must be approved by the University Studies Committee. Requests should be submitted as part of the proposal for a new programme (in the case of programmes which have not yet commenced) or as part of an amended programme proposal for existing programmes. The proposal must contain confirmation from the Executive Dean of the School that the additional entry point(s) will not compromise the student learning experience, nor the quality of teaching on a programme, nor its research activity.

Business Principles

1. Each proposal for an additional entry point should be accompanied by a business case, which should include full costs associated with two or more start dates, namely: additional staffing within Schools (for double-teaching, marking or for administration); systems and process costs which will be incurred by the Professional Services (particularly Registry and Academic Support and Information Services).
2. The content of the business case is to be agreed by all interested parties prior to its submission by the relevant Executive Dean for endorsement by the Vice Principal, who will make any consequently necessary resource adjustments, and then finally for approval by the Programme Management Board.
3. The Registry and Academic Support Directorate will put in place the systems and process modifications required to accommodate multiple start dates as documented in the agreed business plan.

Approved: University Executive, 25 February 2015; Senate, 25 March 2015
Modified and re-issued, 16 June 2015. Updates for factual accuracy, 14 May 2019, 2 July 2025

¹ The concept of "start of semester" entry points is not applicable to many programmes. Programmes delivered online, through a partnership arrangement and postgraduate research degrees, all of which can currently provide entry points other than that start of a semester should still align with the Key Principles outlined here in terms of processes for academic and business approval.