SERC

Course Oversubscription SOP

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Summary of Contents
The Standard Operating Procedure outlines the process the college will follow to ensure a consistent approach to the management of courses that are oversubscribed.

RO Review Information:
Reviewed:

Next Review Due: May 2025

Requires CMT Approval (yes/no):
Yes/~~No~~

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August 2024

Contents

1.0   Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

2.0   Background

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is:

To outline the procedures the College follows in relation to the management of courses in the event that they are oversubscribed. For the purposes of this SOP Oversubscription is defined as where the College has received more applicants that have met the conditions for entry than there are places available.

2.1   To provide guidance for staff relating to the communication and guidance provided to applicants in the event of course oversubscription.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Curriculum Planning and Course Cancellation SOP
- Further Education (FE) Admissions Policy
- Higher Education Admissions Policy

3.0   Scope

3.1   This procedure applies to all DfE funded, work-based learning, school partnerships and business services courses.

4.0 Procedure for the management of Oversubscribed Courses

4.1 Curriculum planning

a) Heads of School will review and agree maximum cohort sizes with the Deputy Principal Curriculum on an annual basis. Once agreed these figures will inform the course set up within the EBS system for the incoming academic year. This exercise will be completed in advance of course applications going live on the website.

b) Heads of School will also review trends in course demand and take action where appropriate to meet the needs of students. For example where there has been sustained demand for a course on a given campus they may plan for an extra cohort for the following year where staffing/budgeting/room availability allow.

c) The overriding ambition of this process is to recruit as many applicants as possible (with integrity) to SERC vocational courses. In the event where suitable provision cannot be identified within SERC applicants may be referred to alternate available provision within the NI Further Education sector.

4.2 Enrolment forecasting – early identification of oversubscribed courses

a) At an agreed period after the commencement of applications (usually after Open Day) each School will undertake an enrolment forecasting exercise. They will use previous agreed enrolment conversion rates to estimate cohort demand for the incoming academic year. This forecast will help identify courses/campuses that are oversubscribed. Using a RAG system School's will be able to identify areas of concern at an early stage. This exercise will allow for corrective action to take place – for example planning for an extra cohort where staffing constraints allow or student intervention at the interview stage (redirection to alternative SERC courses)

b) Actions for staff on these oversubscribed courses must be clearly communicated in advance of student interview dates.

c) For courses where there is a possibility of oversubscription all applicants should be informed of the situation by Customer Services and advised that enrolment should be completed at the earliest opportunity.

d) For programmes where applicants are required to have obtained employment such as AppNI or Higher Level Apprenticeships, a College representative will make contact with the applicant to ascertain if suitable employment is in place. In instances where applicants have not obtained requisite employment they will be directed to apply for a suitable alternative programme such as a Traineeship.

e) Each School must have agreed procedures in place to deal with oversubscribed courses for admission in August.

f) The Principal and Chief Executive and the Deputy Principal Curriculum must be informed of all potential areas of oversubscription.

4.3 Internal College Clearing Process

4.4 Stage 1 – Explore additional cohort(s)

a) During the enrolment phase in August School management teams will analyse actual enrolment trends against predictions. Should a cohort not materialise in one area this may provide the School the opportunity to redirect teaching resources to courses that remain oversubscribed despite the efforts detailed above.

b) Final decisions regarding course viability remain at the discretion of the Principal and Chief Executive and the Deputy Principal Curriculum.

c) Should the School have the flexibility in staffing/budget the first stage of dealing with an oversubscribed course should be to add an additional cohort on that campus should the enrolments be viable.

4.5 Stage 2 – Explore alternative courses within the School

a) Should a new cohort not be feasible the course team should attempt to redirect oversubscribed students to courses allied to their first vocational choice – for example a student looking to enrol on a Level 2 Traineeship in Animal Care may be well served by completing a Level 2 Traineeship in Applied Science in preparation for enrolment on Animal Care in the next academic year.

b) If this solution is not suitable the course team should offer the students, availability permitting, the opportunity to study the course of their choice on another SERC campus.

c) Should both solutions prove unsuitable then the student(s) should be referred to the College Admissions department to explore potential alternatives.

4.6 Stage 3 – College clearing

a) On referral from the Course team the College Admissions team advise the student(s) on potential vocational opportunities available. Using a dynamic dashboard the Admissions team will identify, using live data, spaces available on courses on each campus.

b) Should a potential solution be found, the Admissions team should make direct contact with the course coordinator to meet with student(s) to discuss possible enrolment at their earliest convenience.

c) Where a suitable solution cannot be identified the Admissions team will refer the student(s) to the College Careers Service. College Careers service will interview the student(s) and give impartial advice on potential vocational opportunities available. Using a dynamic dashboard the Careers service will identify, using live data, spaces available on courses on each campus.

d) In a situation where the student(s) course/career aspiration cannot be facilitated then the College Career service will direct the student(s) to Sector clearing.

4.7 Stage 4 – Sector clearing

a) A designated member of staff within the College will be responsible for liaising with partners in the sector during the enrolment phase. The Admissions team will liaise directly with this staff member to provide names of students seeking places on preferred courses. Course availability at other institutions will be articulated to the student(s) through the College Careers service.

b) In a similar way the designated staff member will direct applicants from other partner institutions through the College Careers service through to course teams here at SERC with a view to enrolling those students on an appropriate course.

5.0 Complaints and Appeals

If an applicant wishes to lodge a complaint relating to the admissons process, they should be directed to the College's Complaints Process - Complaints Process.

6.0   Communication Plan

This Standard Operating Procedure is available at www.serc.ac.uk under 'Public Information' and is accessible to SERC staff via the Learning Engine. It can also be made available, upon request, in alternative formats including large print, braille, audio and in other languages.

7.0   Review

This Standard Operating Procedure will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

Appendix 1: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	August 2024	Document created.