



## Learner Policy

## HE Admissions Policy

Lead Responsible	Vice Principal Curriculum and Learner Experience
Effective from	January 2017
Approved by	Senior Management Group
EIA Date	January 2017
Approval Date	January 2017
<b>Review Date</b>	<b>August 2017</b>

## HE ADMISSIONS POLICY

### 1. Aims and Overview

The College aims to recruit with integrity and provide a high quality educational experience for students. This policy is consistent with the College's Single Equality Scheme and the commitments of the Learner Charter. The first important step in ensuring student success is ensuring students are on the right course. This policy sets out the College's commitment to this for Higher Education courses. The policy complies with relevant legislation and takes into account the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admissions to Higher Education, requirements as set by UCAS, any relevant accrediting professional bodies and the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) good practice guidance and principles.

#### Policy Statement

The College's Admission and Recruitment aims are:

- To minimise barriers to access for prospective students.
- To prepare students for successful participation in their chosen careers.
- To recruit students who have the potential and motivation to succeed on their chosen course.
- To ensure fairness, transparency and equal opportunity to all applicants.
- To provide accurate information and advice to all prospective students concerning all Higher Education opportunities to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their choices.

The College will achieve these aims by:

- Encouraging applications from all students regardless of backgrounds.
- Ensuring that each application is assessed equally and in line with College, and/or partner university policies and procedures.
- Selecting students based on their individual merits and their ability to succeed in both their chosen course and profession.
- Providing students with points of reference and contact to obtain further information advice and guidance when a decision not to offer a place has been given.

### 2. Accountability

Recruitment and Admissions activities are carried out in partnership between different departments within the College:

- The Senior Management Group (SMG) is responsible, on behalf of the College, for approving Higher Education Admissions Policies.
- Heads of School in partnership with course leaders and senior managers determine selection criteria, set up reliable initial assessment measures and interviews in order to select students for programmes.
- The Admissions department is responsible for the administrative process including, planning and operation of the application process and interviewing cycles, documentation and forms, enrolment, communication with prospective learners leading to enrolment and providing information and support with careers information, HE loans and fees.

- The Curriculum Director responsible for HE is responsible for ensuring that any policies and procedures are operated in line with the College's strategic aims and objectives, and ensure practice is compliant with relevant legislation.

Admissions decisions are made by academic staff, with support from their Line Managers.

The College works in partnership with partner universities and is responsible for ensuring that, where required, there is compliance with the partner university admissions policies and procedures.

All College staff with admissions responsibilities must be familiar with this policy. The College will provide these staff members with relevant support, training and guidance.

### **3. Key principles**

#### **Information for Applicants and Enquirers**

The College is committed to providing pre-entry information and support to enable prospective students to make informed decisions regarding any application they make to College.

All Higher Education Admissions Policies, Procedures and selection criteria for each programme will be clearly displayed in both printed publications and on the College website, enabling easy access for applicants, partners, agents and staff. Advice will also be made available on the website on how to contact the College for specific queries regarding applications. Each individual programme will publish course information to be displayed on UCAS (for full-time courses) and the College's own publications.

The College will make every effort to ensure that published information is accurate. Many of the publications that are provided are done so more than 12 months prior to the start of a course. Prospective students therefore should also refer to the website for the most up to date information.

The College reserves the right to make changes to courses during the application cycle. Where changes to courses do occur following receipt of applications, the change will be communicated to applicants at the first opportunity. This includes the units or modules delivered as part of the course; if this occurs after a course has started, students will be consulted and their agreement sought prior to the introduction of the change. Any such changes are also approved through an internal College process prior to their introduction.

In certain circumstances a course may have to be closed during the admissions cycle. This could be because there are insufficient applications and/or confirmed acceptances of offers by applicants so that the students choosing to enrol, once the course has started, have an appropriate educational experience. The College will communicate with applicants if this is the case. The College will endeavour to support the affected applicants in finding a suitable alternative.

#### **Selection Criteria**

Applications will be assessed against academic and non-academic selection criteria specific to the course for which they have applied. The College will publish, annually, its selection criteria for all of its programmes and applicants are advised to check the College's publications and website for course specific selection criteria. Entry criteria for all courses are reviewed annually.

For many courses, entry criteria will exceed the minimum institutional requirements which are:

- Applicants should demonstrate acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, equivalent to at least GCSE grade C in English and Mathematics.
- Applicants whose first language is not English should be able to demonstrate English Language proficiency in Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Listening to the standards required by either the College or partner University and to the course for which the applicant has applied.

Selection criteria represent the usual level of academic attainment that an applicant is expected to attain prior to being admitted onto a Higher Education course. The selection criteria are not intended to provide a guarantee that all applicants who meet these basic selection criteria will be offered a place. Staff have the ability to use discretion when considering applicants for specific programmes regarding levels of prior experience and academic achievement.

### **Fitness to practice**

Some courses lead to both academic qualifications and licences to practice, for example for NHS courses such as Nursing. If there is a stipulation about fitness to practice for professional registration, then that will be included in the entry criteria as a mandatory requirement for entry to the course. Please note that you may not be offered a place on a course if your history or personal circumstances mean you would not be able to progress into a specific industry/sector or job role.

Some courses will require occupational health checks or Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as part of their conditions of entry. This could be because there are external requirements regarding placements. The College reserves the right to deny admission to such programmes to applicants who are unable to supply a satisfactory Occupational Health or DBS check. Where a student has been refused entry based on an Occupational Health or DBS check the College will supply feedback as to the reasons for this decision. All information provided to the College on an Occupational Health or DBS check remain confidential between the course leader for the specific course and the applicant.

Following enrolment, if a further disclosure or other information becomes available that was not disclosed and considered during the admissions process the student's enrolment may be re-assessed and cancelled as a result of the new information.

### **Fitness to study**

The College has a Fitness to Study policy which is intended to protect individual students and the College community. If it becomes clear to the College that an applicant may be unfit to study, as defined by the policy, then discussion with the applicant will take place. The outcome may be that the application is subsequently deferred or rejected.

### **Assessing Applications**

The College receives many more applications than it has places for, and therefore the admissions process is competitive.

All applications are assessed against the same entry criteria on an individual basis. Where places are limited, we offer places to those applications who the admissions staff consider to best evidence their potential to benefit from their chosen programme. Methods of assessing applications vary between courses but may include:

- Prior and predicted academic achievement. Many of our courses utilise UCAS tariff points but where this is not the case it will be made clear on the course specific pages of the website.
- References.
- Personal or supporting statements.
- Interviews.
- Aptitude tests/initial assessments (where required).
- Previous relevant employment and experience.
- Previous non-academic achievement.

We understand that, on occasion, the standard procedure for assessing an applicant's suitability for a course may not provide the admissions staff with an accurate understanding of an applicant's suitability and, in such cases, we may require applicants to submit additional evidence in support of their application. Applicants will be contacted directly by the admissions staff with clear guidance on what is required.

The College reserves the right not to admit:

- Learners who have any outstanding debts with the College.
- Applicants/learners who have previously been excluded from this or any other educational institution.
- Individuals who previously attended the College but failed to make sufficient effort towards successfully completing their studies.
- Learners where there is evidence that they could be a threat or danger to others.
- Learners whose behaviour has been considered to be "vexatious" towards the College.

To be officially enrolled a learner must have completed an 'enrolment form'; had the enrolment form signed by an appropriate member of staff and committed to the appropriate fee. This is an important contractual stage in the admissions process.

### **Entry Qualifications**

The College will accept students from a range of different qualification backgrounds and will give fair consideration to any applicant presenting a relevant academic qualification.

Individual courses reserve the right to judge the relevance and acceptability of any qualification presented for entry. Where any qualifications or subjects are less favoured this will be made clear within the published criteria on the course specific pages. The College will accept applications from students who are currently re-taking all or part of their previous qualification and will accept re-sit grades when assessing entry qualifications.

### **Use of Contextual Data**

'Contextual data' is the context in which an individual's academic attainment to date has been achieved. When assessing applications for the suitability of their chosen course, the College will not use contextual data to supplement and support admissions decisions. Contextual data includes but is not limited to:

- i. Length of time in Local Authority Care.
- ii. The relative performance of the school or college from which the applicant is applying.
- iii. Whether the individual is applying from an area with low participation in Higher Education.
- iv. Moves from abroad (educational that was disrupted impacting on the admissions decision).

### **Mature Applicants, Prior Learning and Students returning to education**

The College welcomes applications from mature students. Admissions staff will ensure that these applicants are not disadvantaged in the selection process. The applications will be considered against the advertised course specific selection criteria. The College is aware that for mature applicants the selection process may not always evidence their full suitability for the chosen course. Where appropriate, curriculum staff will seek and consider alternative evidence to ensure that applicants are given equal consideration. Where this additional evidence is deemed to meet entry criteria fully, an applicant may not be required to meet the standard academic entry criteria.

Applicants who do not have formal qualifications may be able to be considered through the APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) which may be based on prior experiences and/or qualifications. Students seeking entry through the APL route will be assessed against specific learning outcomes on specifically designed assessments.

### **Students with Additional Support Needs**

The College welcomes applications from prospective students with disabilities or Additional Support Needs. All applications from students are considered against the set selection criteria for each course, with consideration being given during this process to any impact this may have on attainment. Upon receipt of an application where a disability, health condition or learning difficulty has been declared, the admissions staff will request additional information from the applicant to ensure that full consideration to the applicant's needs has been considered during the selection process. Where it is apparent that an applicant will require reasonable adjustments to enable them to undertake the course, and are considered academically suitable for the course, the admissions staff will discuss the applicants needs during the interview process so that support measures can be put in place for the start of the programme.

Where the needs of the applicant are complex, the College may issue an offer based on academic and other eligibility criteria which remain subject to investigation as to whether the College is able to make such adjustments. In the event that the College is unable to provide the support required to the applicant, the College will discuss this with the applicant directly to advise and, where possible, support the applicant in making further decisions relating to this.

Students with Additional Support Needs are welcome to contact the College in advance of an application to discuss their requirements.

## **Overseas students**

### **i) Non-UK qualifications**

Any applicant presenting non-UK qualifications for entry onto a programme will be considered against the standard entry criteria to include English and maths.

When comparing non-UK qualifications, the College will liaise with NARIC, the designated United Kingdom national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills. Applicants are required to provide officially translated transcripts of their qualifications prior to starting their course; students who have conditional offers, will not be issued with relevant documents prior to receiving this.

All Applicants with non-UK qualifications where English is not the first language will still be required to provide evidence of English language proficiency in Speaking, Writing, Reading and Listening. The College minimum language requirement is IELTS (Academic) at grade 5.5 overall, and must not have a score below 5.0 in Speaking, Listening, Writing and Reading. Applicants should be aware that some courses may have specific requirements that are higher than the College basic requirements. Where this is the case, details will be provided on individual course information sheets. A number of equivalent qualifications are accepted and applicants are welcome to contact the Admissions Office with specific queries related to Non-UK Qualifications and Language requirements.

### **ii) Tier 4 Visa**

The UK Government operates a points based immigration system for studying in the UK, with which the College is compliant. Any student requiring a visa to study within the UK is advised to look at the UK Visas and Immigration Service web pages for further advice and guidance. A Certificate of Sponsorship (CAS) will only be issued to students who have met their conditions of entry, provided the required documentation and paid 100% of their overall tuition fee.

## **Applicants seeking deferred entry**

The College allows applicants to be considered for deferred entry and this is only usually granted for one year. In exceptional circumstances applicants may be able to defer their application for two years, at the discretion of the admissions staff. Deferred applications will be considered against the published entry criteria at the point of application and will, as a result, be treated equally to all other applications up to the point of confirmation.

Students wishing to defer their application halfway through an admissions cycle will still be required to obtain all of their conditions of entry within the admissions cycle in which they have applied. Where this concerns a Disclosure and Barring Service check, or Occupational Health check, students will be required to repeat this process within six months of the course start date to ensure that the checks are as up to date as possible. For Disclosure and Barring Service checks, students registered to the update service may not need to reapply. Students are advised to contact the Admissions Office to discuss.

Deferred students who fail to meet their conditions of offer will not be able to defer their application and will instead need to re-apply in the next application cycle to be considered.

## **Applicants who re-apply and the re-admittance of excluded students**

Applicants are able to re-apply for their chosen courses following a reject decision, providing that they are able to demonstrate a material change from the previous application.

Applications will be considered against the advertised selection criteria for the specific course that an application has been made for. The College may draw upon information provided within any previous application or registration with the College when assessing suitability for a course.

Any student previously excluded from the College can normally re-apply the following year for a Higher Education course. Potential applicants are encouraged to contact the College before applying to discuss the merits of re-applying.

## **Children**

Applicants who are under eighteen on the first of September at the year of entry are considered to be 'Children' under UK Law. The College will welcome applications for Higher Education courses from such applicants providing that they have managed to satisfy the course specific entry criteria.

## **Applicants with criminal convictions**

All aspects of the admissions process are included within the College procedures for safeguarding learners.

The enrolment form now requires applicants to declare if they have any unspent criminal convictions. Where a positive declaration is made, the applicant is referred to a safeguarding officer to complete a risk assessment prior to being permitted to enrol. The College retains the right to reject any applicant where the nature of their conviction could impact of other learners. Details of the declaration and staff decision will be completed on a standard form and retained.

The College reserves the right to conduct a risk assessment on any learner at any time. The College reserves the right to withdraw a learner if it is found that an applicant has provided incorrect information during the application and enrolment process.

The purpose of the risk assessment is to identify and assess any applicant whose known behaviour or past record indicates that they may be a risk to themselves, other learners, staff, visitors or the College environment. When conducting the risk assessment, the College will consider each applicant's individual circumstances in a fair and objective way. All information collected will be treated as strictly confidential and following the outcome of the risk assessment will be available to a limited number of staff on a 'need to know' basis. The risk assessment will then be undertaken by the appropriate manager.

Applicants who have been refused a place at the College as a result of a risk assessment may appeal against the decision in the form of a letter to be sent to the Vice Principal Curriculum and Learner Experience within 10 days of the recommendation. The Vice Principal will consider each individual case and confirm the decision to the applicant in writing.

Programmes of study which require students to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults will require students to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check prior to commencing their course of study. Applicants are usually expected to pay for this check. Where an enhanced DBS check reveals any prior criminal behaviour which gives rise to concern, the College reserves the right to refuse admission.

### **Fraudulent and Misleading information**

It is expected that all applicants will provide full, honest, reliable and accurate information in their applications and supporting evidence when seeking admission to one of the College's Higher Education programmes. Where there is reason to suspect that this may not be the case the College reserves the right to investigate the matter fully. If, as a result of such investigations, the College finds that the applicant has been fraudulent or has provided misleading information to the College, the College reserves the right to reject the application without further consideration, or where an offer of a place has been granted, withdraw the offer. Where a withdrawal or rejection decision has been made in such circumstances, the College reserves the right to notify any relevant professional bodies and/or third parties. Similarly, any student found to be admitted on the basis of fraudulent information may have their enrolment cancelled.

### **Financial Information and Fee Assessments**

The College expects applicants applying to their chosen course(s) to evidence that they have considered how they will finance their course. The information about funding is requested in the application to the College. The College can provide further information regarding funding and payment options on our website, or alternatively applicants can contact our Admissions Office directly.

As part of the admissions process the College uses information provided on the UCAS application forms to assess whether a student is eligible to pay Home (UK/EU) or overseas fees. Where the Admissions Office do not feel that they have enough information to determine which is the right category, they may request the applicant provides additional information. It is the responsibility of the applicant to advise the College if they feel the assessment for fees is incorrect prior to enrolling onto their chosen course.

Where students are accessing loans via the Student Loans Company, it is the student's responsibility to ensure these are in place within 8 weeks of enrolling on their chosen course. Failure to do so could result in removal from the course or alternative arrangements for payment of fees made. Admissions staff are available to support with this. If a student is experiencing difficulties, they should speak to a member of staff as soon as possible. International students should be aware that the College will request full payment of fees upfront, prior to commencing study at the College.

## **4. Applicant Data**

All data submitted to the College during the Admissions Process is used to assess the suitability of an applicant for study at the College. Data may also be used by the College for statistical and reporting purposes. The application data forms part of a student's record when they are admitted to the College and, where relevant, partner universities.

The College complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 in its use of applicant data. Further information about Data Protection at the College can be found on our website, under our Data Protection Policy.

## **Learner Charter and Code of Conduct**

The rights and responsibilities of learners are set out in our Learner Charter and Code of Conduct which are available on our website and in the Course Handbook students receive.

### **5. Feedback, appeals and complaints**

Applicants will receive final decisions on their applications via UCAS Track (full-time courses) or by letter (part-time courses).

For unsuccessful applicants, the College feels it is important for students to have the opportunity to receive feedback on the reasons for the decision. Feedback can be requested in writing by contacting the Admissions Office via letter or email. The Admissions Office will aim to respond to any requests for feedback within 10 working days of receipt of the request. Following feedback, if an applicant feels that they have any grounds for a formal review of the admissions decision, they can formally appeal by writing to the Admissions Office who will have the appropriate Head of School respond in writing with a reviewed decision within 10 working days. This decision is final.

If a student or applicant is not satisfied with any aspect of the Admissions Service, they should contact the Learner Recruitment Manager. They will receive an acknowledgement of their concern within five working days and a response within ten working days.

If they are not satisfied with the response, they should refer to the College Complaints Policy.

### **6. Admissions Cycle**

The admissions cycle is the process by which applicants are recruited to courses, compliant with the principles described above. Once the cycle is complete and the applicant enrolls, they become a student. The Application Cycle is described in Annexe 1.

### **7. Course Closures**

The College reviews the demands for its courses on a regular basis. This process involves the consideration of a wide range of factors including fit to the College's strategic priorities; current and future student demand; resourcing and investment requirements; and quality and effectiveness of delivery.

#### **Course Closures – Prior to start date**

There are occasions when it is necessary to either reduce or close provision. When any such decision is made, it is essential that the College manages the way in which students who may have been interested in enrolling on the affected programmes are supported.

Initial discussions take place between the Head of School and the Director of Curriculum who have responsibility for a course that is likely to be closed. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Learner Experience is consulted and any proposed closure is approved. Students affected by a closure are informed as soon as possible after such a decision is made. The Head of School will follow this up in writing and an advice and guidance session will be offered to assist in identifying alternative provision available.

## **Course Closures – During programme**

The College does everything possible to prevent programmes from closing that are in progress, however there are occasions when it is necessary to close provision which is already running. When any such decision is made, it is essential that the College manages the way in which students who may be affected are supported.

Initial discussions take place between the Head of School and the Director of Curriculum who have responsibility for a course that is likely to be closed. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Learner Experience is consulted and any proposed closure is approved. Students affected by a closure are informed as soon as possible after such a decision is made. The Head of School will follow this up in writing and will meet with each of the students to discuss continuation options. In some cases this is via the accrediting University offer at another site or in some cases the College may transfer students to alternative provision at another college or site.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

In order to monitor and improve the advice and recruitment process, the College will:

- Conduct regular surveys to gain feedback from enquirers, applicants and students
- Monitor and action plan any complaints received through the College complaints process, if appropriate.
- Monitor changing patterns in the application market, availability of and demand for different modes of study and qualifications offered for applicants.
- As part of Equality and Diversity monitoring, compare the recruitment levels and achievement rates of applicants/students from minority and disadvantaged groups with those of the majority.
- Summarise and review data regarding applications, offers made and enrolments on a course-by-course basis in order to inform the future recruitment strategy and curriculum development.

## **9. Liability**

The College takes reasonable care to ensure that you as a learner are safe and secure whilst on College sites and/or using the College's services. The College cannot accept responsibility, and expressly excludes liability, for loss or damage to your personal property, which includes computers and software. You are strongly advised to insure your property against theft and other risks.

The College will not be held responsible for any injury to you (financial or otherwise) or for any loss or damage to your property caused by any person who is not an employee, student or sub-contractor of the College.

The College will not be liable if we fail to carry out our responsibilities as stated in this policy or other College policies or procedures if events are outside of our control. This includes war, terrorist attack, civil commotion, riot, fire, explosions, natural disasters such as earthquake, flood and adverse weather, failure of public or private telecommunications networks or power outages.

In the event any of the above happening, the College will take reasonable steps to contact you and will re-institute our contractual obligations as soon as reasonably possible after the event.

## **10. Equality Commitment**

We are committed to ensuring that all of our College community is treated with fairness and respect, having the opportunity to learn and work in an environment that is free from discrimination.

## **ANNEXE 1 APPLICATION CYCLE**

### **UCAS**

Students applying for all full-time Higher Education courses delivered at the College will be required to register with UCAS when making applications. This includes all Higher National qualifications, Foundation Degrees, Bachelor's Degrees and Top up Degrees. This may be done in advance by the applicant themselves, or directly with College via a Record of Prior Acceptance.

Part-time applications are not currently supported via UCAS and, as a result, students should apply directly to College on-line. A paper application form is available upon request from the Admissions Office.

### **The Admissions Cycle**

The College complies with the UCAS published admissions cycle and will consider all full-time applications received before 15<sup>th</sup> January in the year of commencement of the course on an equal basis. Where space allows, the College will accept late applications (post 15<sup>th</sup> January) for its Higher Education Courses.

The Admissions Process for College starts from the first Monday in October, applications received prior to this date will be acknowledged and considered after this date. Part-time applications can be made until a course starts or becomes full, whichever comes first. Applications after the start of a course

The College will consider applications on a case by case basis after the course has commenced where space allows. Responsibility for making decisions on such requests are made by the Head of School.

### **Interview, Auditions, Admissions Tests and Portfolios**

For some courses applicants will be required to attend additional selection measures to help curriculum staff in making decisions. Course information pages on the College website detail whether this is applicable for each individual programme of study with details of what the selection criteria involve.

All interviews, auditions, admissions tests and portfolios will be reviewed equally with consideration given to applicants' individual circumstances. Where it is impractical for an applicant to travel, or provide specific requirements, the College will aim to provide a reasonable alternative where possible.

### **Communicating with applicants and timescales**

The College recognises the importance of keeping applicants informed and will provide effective updates throughout the admissions process. Communications will only be sent directly to the applicant or nominated representative as stated on the UCAS application form. The majority of our communications are sent electronically via email or through UCAS Track (full-time only). We send a range of information out throughout the cycle including:

- i. Acknowledgement of application – within 5 working days of receipt of your application.
- ii. Requests for further information – within two weeks of receiving an application.
- iii. Invitations to submit portfolio or attend interview – within two weeks of receiving an application.
- iv. Confirmation that a decision has been made on an application – within two weeks of receiving all required information, or five days following interview selection method.
- v. Confirmation of meeting entry conditions – usually within 5 days of receiving exam results.
- vi. Joining information – usually in August after confirmation of results.

In addition to the above the College may also send out various supplementary communications about your chosen course area or the College.

### **Confirmation of application decision**

Applicants will receive final decisions on their applications via UCAS Track (full-time) or letter (part-time). Successful students will usually receive either a conditional offer, where some of the selection criteria for the course is yet to be achieved, or an unconditional offer, where the applicant has demonstrated that they adequately meet the advertised selection criteria for the course. All students receive a Course Handbook at enrolment which provides further information about the course.

Unsuccessful applicants will also receive confirmation of their decision via UCAS Track (full-time) or letter (part-time). Please refer to the section above about making complaints or appeals.

### **Confirmation of meeting entry conditions**

Confirmation is the name given to the period of time in the year where the College receives exam results for GCSE, A Level and other qualifications. This usually takes place during July and August each year. Decisions will be made on the basis of these results to confirm students who have met their conditions of offer. Any student who has not met their conditions of offer will be reviewed and, where it is judged as appropriate and space allows, will still be confirmed onto their chosen course. Where possible, the College may offer an alternative course to students who have not met their conditions of entry to their first choice.

### **Enrolment**

Enrolment into the chosen course will take place at the conclusion of the admissions cycle. Only students who have satisfied the full selection criteria will be able to enrol onto the course. The College only permits students to enrol onto one full-time course at any one time.