

Higher Education Admissions Policy & Procedure

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| **This policy applies to :** | Higher Education students |
| **Author/Department:** | Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead |
| **Area/Person responsible:** | Senior Admissions Officer, Marketing Officer & Higher Education staff |
| **Date approved:** |  |
| **Related Documents/ Policies:** | Fees Policy CEIAG Strategy |
| **Date of Next Review:** | January 2025 |

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| **Date of most recent review:** | January 2024 |
| **Changes made:** | Annual update |

## The Equality Act 2010: The Equality Duty

The College has a duty to consider the needs of all individuals in our day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to our employees. The Equality Duty has three aims, which require the College to have due regard to the need to:

* **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
* **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
* **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

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| **Does the policy support the aims of the Equality Duty?** | **Yes** |  | **No** |  | **N/A** |  |
| **If no, please state which groups may be affected and complete a full equalities impact assessment**(guidance and forms available on the intranet) |  |
| **Impact Assessment Reference:** |  |

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| **Initial Impact Assessment Completed** |  |
| **Review of Policy** |  |

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| **Date** |  |
| **Date** |  |

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# Introduction

* 1. The purpose of this policy is to provide prospective students and staff with a guide to the admission of Higher Education (HE) students at Ashton Sixth Form College. The policy has been drawn up following examination of sector best practice guidance from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and aims to provide an efficient, fair and transparent admission function for higher education students at the College.
	2. The College vision is to be outstanding and pursue excellence. We value the diversity of our students and are committed to providing a high standard admissions service for all.
	3. The college is fully responsible for admissions related decisions for all our courses and H.E. programmes run in partnership with Staffordshire University.
	4. This policy covers admissions to all full time and part time HE courses at the college and is available on the college website or via the Senior admissions Officer

For further information regarding admissions to courses awarded by our partner institution, please refer to the Staffordshire University admissions policy: <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/admissions/index.jsp>

# Principles of Fair Admissions

* 1. The College staff support the core activities of fair recruitment, admissions and widening participation/access for our students.
	2. The HE & Adult Education Department is committed to providing a fair admissions system which provides equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. We uphold the principals of fair admission through being transparent, fair, honest, consistent, accessible, personalised and timely. [Schwartz Report (2004)].
	3. The aims of the department are to ensure that:
		1. Applicants are provided with as much information as possible to enable them to make informed choices and appropriate applications. Appendix D outlines the main interactive stages between the college and prospective students and consumer protection law compliance. We will provide high quality information and advice on all aspects of recruitment, selection and admissions including our entry requirements, course information, duration and fees through our Senior Admissions Officer, Marketing Officer, specialist teaching staff, external advertising, course leaflets, open evenings/days, information and application packs and employer events.
		2. Applicants are treated fairly and equitably in their application to the college.
		3. Applicants can achieve success on the appropriate level of course, in light of previous experience, qualifications and career plans
		4. Applicants are dealt with in a timely and professional manner.
		5. Students receive a high quality service.
		6. Applicants are given clear details about entry criteria and application procedures for admission.
		7. Applicants are provided with an initial guidance interview/discussion

# Learner Eligibility

* 1. Detailed guidance is followed in line with the Office for Students. The College will use this guidance to support enrolment and funding decisions during admissions.
	2. On admission, the following checks will be made:
		1. Is the learner a UK National or EEA National? If NO, a copy of their passport will be requested and nationality established. A passport or birth certificate is required at enrolment for all learners.
		2. Has the learner been ordinarily resident in the UK or EEA for the past 3 years? If NO further assessments will be made regarding eligibility to be in the UK and/or be funded. Even where a learner indicates YES, if the enroller believes a status check is required, this will be pursued.
		3. The following documentation may be requested:
			+ Passport
			+ Immigration share code
			+ Visa details (or parent/spouse details)
			+ Exam Certificates
			+ Home Office documents
		4. Where a student has a visa that allows them to be in the UK and to undertake funded or unfunded learning, a check will be made to ensure that the visa expiry date is after the course end date.
		5. Where the student does not meet the criteria set out by the Office for Students funding eligibility guidance then fees will be charged for tuition/examination costs subject to confirmation of rights to live and study in the UK.
		6. This Admissions Policy does not cover International Student Admissions.
		7. Applicants must be aged 18 year or over to start one of our higher education courses.

# Admissions Procedures

* 1. Admission to courses is at various times throughout the year. The process of applying varies depending on the course and level of study. Pages on our website provide a step-by-step guide to the application process for our Higher Education courses. The college acts fairly towards applicants for admission and exercises equal treatment without unlawful discrimination in line with the recommendations by the Quality Assurance Agency’s Quality Code of Practice, chapter B2. We are committed to providing transparent recruitment and admissions activities ensuring all applicants are considered and evaluated on an individual basis. The college is committed to fair access and admissions encouraging and welcoming applications from all social and educational backgrounds.
	2. All students are interviewed or have an admission discussion with specialist staff to assess suitability for the course. The main purpose of this is to provide advice and guidance about the courses applied for and any alternatives that could or should be considered. Interviews and admission discussions also provide an opportunity for applicants to find out more about the College.
	3. Information regarding learning difficulties, disabilities, health, study needs, attendance or other issues which may affect a learner’s progress will be discussed, as well as being requested from the student at the point of application and enrolment. The objective is to discuss the needs of such students so that the college can put in to place a suitable package of support.
	4. The decision about whether to accept a learner onto the course for which they have applied, rests with those with authority during the enrolment period, the final decision rests with the Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead. Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:
		+ Previous qualifications or predicted achievement – do they meet the entry requirements?
		+ Assessment (if required)
		+ Previous experience
		+ Potential to succeed and progress from the course
		+ Personal statements (if applicable)
		+ Portfolios (if applicable)
		+ Interview
		+ Additional needs
		+ Ability to support the safety of others
		+ Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance where appropriate

4.5. We promote equality of opportunity for all, which includes those who may possess a criminal conviction. When considering applicants with relevant criminal convictions, the college applies the legislation relating to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Applicants to some H.E. courses require mandatory DBS checks and this is discussed at the interview stage. The Head of Subject in conjunction with the Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead, are responsible for considering the relevance and impact of any convictions declared. The applicant may be asked to sign a self-declaration confirming that they are aware that their conviction would bar entry to a related profession. Information on applicant’s criminal convictions is appropriately safeguarded and only made available to the relevant admissions staff.

* 1. Every effort will be made to find a course appropriate for all applicants. However, despite all reasonable adjustments being made, in some circumstances, enrolment may not be possible. Reasons for this include, but are not limited to:
		+ Not meeting academic standards,
		+ Physical requirements are unable to be catered for (e.g. unable to complete assessments for physical reasons).
		+ Failing DBS check where this is a requirement
		+ Failure to achieve pass mark in any required pre-entry tests
	2. Learners are required to disclose any support needs and medical conditions on their application/enrolment form. The college will take all reasonable steps to provide additional learning support or other support needs if a need is declared.
	3. In line with the Equality Act 2010, we promote equality of access to education, training and development. No applicant judged to be academically suitable will be refused admission on grounds of disability without compelling reasons. It is important that students tell us on the application form of any impairment so that, wherever possible, we can ensure that we provide the facilities and support they require.
	4. We welcome applications and support students who are leaving care. We welcome applicants of all ages and backgrounds. Applications will be considered from mature students who may not have qualifications which fit into our standard entry criteria and each application will be assessed taking into account any relevant experience and skills.
	5. If an application is received from a learner who is related to a member of teaching staff or has a close personal involvement, this results in a circumstance which may cause a conflict of interest. The student will be made aware on application that an alternate tutor or dual observations/second marking will be put in place for the duration of the course.
	6. Decisions re applications will be made at interview and communicated to applicants as quickly as possible. Where we are unable to make an offer for an applicant’s original choice of course, we may offer an alternative course for the applicant to consider. An online enrolment form is completed prior to the start of the course with learning agreements available on Cedar at the start of the course. All students are expected to sign the learning agreement.
	7. Where assessments are part of the interview process, full details of the process will be sent prior to the interview. Any course specific additional information required for interview will be sent with the interview invitation.
	8. Decisions reached following interviews will be communicated to the applicant directly from the college by letter and via UCAS (if applicable). The Offer Letter will include the College’s Terms and Conditions and a PDF file link of the university’s academic regulations, and details on the applicant’s right to cancel. The applicant is requested to return the Course Offer Acceptance Form where they are agreeing to enter into a contract with the College.
	9. When a particular course has too few applications from learners to proceed, the college will advise applicants as soon as possible of alternative courses available in the event of the original course being closed.
	10. In this circumstance a course closure process is followed and the Higher & Adult Education Course Closure Form is to be completed and signed off by the Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead (please see Appendix C). Initial discussions take place between the course closure proposer and the Assistant Principal who discusses the course closure at SLT. If approved, the process at course level will begin. The Curriculum Leader or Head of Area completes the Higher & Adult Education Course Closure form. The Assistant Principal then signs the form. The Senior Admissions Officer informs the MIS department and partner organisation (if applicable).
	11. We recognise that it is important that unsuccessful applicants have the opportunity to receive feedback on their application. Applicants will automatically receive feedback regarding unsuccessful application decisions.
	12. Support and training is provided for admissions staff who will continue to attend the Student Loan Company training events as required for CPD, and meetings at our partner university to ensure compliance with university policies.

# Student Protection Plan

* 1. The Student Protection Plan sets out what measures we have in place to protect students studying at Ashton Sixth Form College (Stamford Park Trust) on a Staffordshire University award. This applies in the event that a risk to the continuation of your studies should arise.
	2. The measures contained in this plan are in addition to the protections students have under consumer protection law, and do not impinge on their consumer rights. The College and the University retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to courses, programmes and module content year on year, and these in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures. However, if a student feels the course as delivered varies significantly from what they expected, they may be able to seek recourse under consumer or contract law. A copy of the policy is available on the college website or on request from the Senior Admissions Officer.

# Appeals Process

* 1. Unsuccessful applicants have the right of appeal. Applicants are requested to write in the first instance to the Senior Admissions Officer, via H.E.& Adult Education Admissions, using the Admissions Appeal Process. Please see Appendix B for more details. The applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal and given an explanation for the decision which has been reached.

# References

* 1. This policy is informed by the College’s internal Equality and Diversity Policy, H.E. Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy, Fee Policy, HE Complaints Policy and Procedure, CEIAG Strategy, Enterprise and Employability Strategy, Staffordshire University’s Admissions Policy, UK Quality Code for Higher Education (chapter B2), UK higher education providers-advice on consumer protection law and by the following external Acts:

-Children Act 2004

-Education Act 2011

-Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

-Equality Act 2010

-Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

-Safeguarding and Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

- Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations The College will review this Admissions Policy annually.

**Appendix A Entry Requirements**

Our entry requirements and fee information is regularly reviewed to ensure parity of requirements between qualifications and consider whether additional qualifications may be included within our published entry requirements.

This is published on the college’s web pages, in printed materials and on external websites such as UCAS and is shared with all relevant staff, and added to this policy annually.

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| **Subject** | **Entry Criteria** |
| Level 4Level 6 | The relevant university or awarding body’s guidelines will be followed. In general, most applicants are expected to hold some level 3 qualifications and / or have relevant work experience prior to course entry. An interview will be held to assess suitability.The University’s guidelines will be followed. The learner is expected to already hold level 5 qualifications. |

**Appendix B Admissions Appeal Procedure**

All applications are considered on their individual merits and treated in a fair and equal way based on all information provided to the College through the application process. The responsibility of making offers for available places is with the Admissions Team and Head of Subject areas.

We reserve the right to refuse admission to applicants who do not meet entry requirements or who the College believes, for specific reasons, would not be fit to be a student at the College.

Our approach to the admission of mature applicants and applicants from non-traditional or non- standard academic routes is flexible. Each application is considered individually. The College recognises that previous experience gained in work or other areas of life may have prepared mature applicants for a course of study.

Applicants should only be rejected:

* If the Head of the subject area has informed admissions to stop recruiting for the programme (i.e. the course is full).
* The student cannot possibly meet the standard entry requirements in the time frame –e.g. the student has a level 3 but not in a relevant subject and cannot demonstrate suitable subject knowledge.
* An applicant who cannot be assessed against standard entry criteria cannot demonstrate capacity to study for example at level 4 and/or relevant subject knowledge.
* Two interviews have been missed with no explanation for absence.

A reason must be provided when an applicant is rejected, particularly where the applicant cannot be assessed against standard entry criteria. For Staffordshire University programmes a reject code must be selected.

The College recognises that it is important that unsuccessful applicants have the opportunity to receive feedback on their application. UCAS applicants will automatically receive minimum feedback via UCAS Track, however we are happy to provide further feedback if possible. Any unsuccessful decision for non-UCAS applicants will be made by letter from the College.

The College recognises that on occasion an applicant may wish to appeal against a selection decision. An appeal is a request for a formal review of an admissions decision or the wording/terms/conditions of an offer.

* + 1. If an applicant considers that they may have cause for an appeal, they are requested to write in the first instance to the Senior Admissions Officer, via H.E. & Adult Education Admissions, using the Admissions Appeal Form, and this must be received in writing within 10 working days of the decision to which the appeal relates.
		2. The College will provide a response to the appeal within 10 working days inviting the applicant to a meeting with the Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead and the Head of the subject area to discuss whether the appeal is upheld or rejected and the reasons for the decision.
		3. The applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal and given an explanation for the decision which has been reached.
		4. The decision is final and there is no further right of appeal.
		5. No applicants will be discriminated against in any future application on the basis of appealing a previous admissions decision.

Admissions will collate annual statistics relating to the number of formal appeals received and the outcomes.

In accordance with principles of the Data Protection Act 2018, appeals will only be accepted from the individual who applied to the programme of study. Appeals will not be accepted from parents, carers, friends, teachers or any other third person unless the applicant has provided written confirmation that we may correspond with a named alternative contact.

Complaints

A complaint is a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies.

Complaints relating to HE admissions will be managed in accordance with Stage 2 of the Higher Education Complaints Policy and Procedure which can be found on the college website or on request from the Senior Admissions Officer.

This procedure should be used when an applicant is dissatisfied with the service they have received from the college with regard to an application.

**Higher Education Admissions Appeal Form**

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| Applicant’s full name: |  |
| Programme: |  |
| Postal address: |  |
| Email address: |  |
| Date decision received – appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the unsuccessful decision. Late appeals will only be accepted inexceptional circumstances and reasons for the delay should be stated here. |  |
| Please provide a statement below giving further details of the grounds on which you appeal. Any available evidence which the applicant wishes the College to consider must be submitted with this form. (Continue on separate sheets if necessary). |
|  |
| Sign name: | Date: |

Please return this form to:

Senior Admissions Officer

H.E.& Adult Education Admissions Ashton Sixth Form College Darnton Road

Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 9RL

**Appendix C**

**Higher & Adult Education Course Closure Form**

This form is to be completed for any HE or Adult Education course that is to be closed. This includes any partner franchised course, and any course validated by a partner HEI. All sections should be completed. A signed copy of the form should be forwarded to the Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead.

1. Title of Course: ……………………………………………………………………………………………..
2. If Edexcel or WJEC course, then please state: …………………………………………………………
3. Name of partner organisation if course is being closed: ……………………………………………….
4. Course Codes for all modes applying for closure (e.g. full time, part time): ………………………….
5. Mode(s) of Study it is proposed to close:…………………………..
6. Mode(s) of Study (if any) remaining: ……………………………….
7. Last academic year there is to be a first year intake:……………
8. Last academic year it is estimated that there will be any continuing students on the course:………………
9. Provide details of plans for any continuing students:…………………………………………………………….
10. If there are current applicants, please explain what arrangements will be made to advise them of alternative courses:………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………...

1. Reasons for Closure of the Programme:

Print name of proposer of course closure: ………………………………………………….. Print name of Head of Area: …………………………………………………….

This form should be sent to the Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead Signature of Assistant Principal - Higher and Adult Education & Practitioner Research Lead:

…………………………………….. Date: ………………………………….

The relevant form should be sent to the partner organisation, (if applicable).

**Appendix D**

Student makes an application to their chosen HE provider(s)

Student conducts research into possible courses and HE providers

**Consumer Protection Law flowchart**

**Main interaction stages between HE provider and prospective students**

**Stage 1**

**Information Provision (Information/application packs, course guide, HE prospectus, adverts, webpages, information given at information events, over the phone, in person at college)**

HE Providers must give prospective students the ‘material information’ they need to make an informed decision before they apply. This information includes:-

-the course content and structure and how it will be delivered

-the total course costs (inc. tuition fees and any extra costs associated with the course that students are likely to incur).

-any information that is likely to affect a prospective student’s decision

Information much be clear, accurate and easily accessible.

Consumer law applies to information given in writing, verbally or visually.

If the information changes before the contract is agreed (offer stage) we need to get the student’s express agreement to the change e.g. highlight any changes when the student is sent their offer letter (or before).

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| **Stage 2** | **Information Provision – pre-contract information –****The offer Letter (include our terms and conditions and academic regulations)****Provide information students need to make a decision, including pre-contract information, before they accept a formal offer of a place on the course.**Where relevant, the conditions under which the provider will reserve a place for the student on the course and important information about the course, including:-course title-core and optional modules for the course-award to be received on completion and the awarding body-whether the course is accredited and by whom-duration of course-total price-details of any other costs-whether fees in future years might or will increase, who this would apply to and method by which any increases will be calculated-identity of HE provider the student is contracting with, address, telephone number-if different from the HE provider offering the course, include the name/address of the HE provider awarding the qualification, plus the relevant contact details-The HE provider’s fax number and email address-the complaint handling policy and complaint/redress mechanism-include details about the complaint handling process for academic and non-academic complaints and where to locate the full policy, and any other redress options that are available to the student with third parties such as the OIA (where applicable)-payment, service delivery and performance arrangements-payment of tuition fees-location of study-composition of course and how it will be delivered-number and type of contact hours that students can expect-expected workload of students-details about the general level of experience or status of the staff-overall method(s) of assessment for the course-details of any applicable codes of conduct the college is a member of and how to obtain a copy of that code-details of deposits required and to be paid by the student and when-information about the right to cancel and a model cancellation form. (Student has the right to cancel and withdraw during a 14 day period from the date the contract is entered into - the day the student accepts the offer). |
| Student receives a-firm offer or a-conditional offer which is subject to entry requirements being met. |
| Student receives a firm offer or meets the entry requirementsWhen an offer is accepted, the HE provider and prospective student will enter into a contract for admission to a course.Requirement to give confirmation of a distance contract and pre contract information using a ‘durable medium’, within a reasonable time after the contract is entered into (unless it was already provided on a durable medium)e.g. letter or email with documents attached (but not a website link). |

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**Stage 3**

**Enrolment**

When prospective students enrol you should ensure that:

-you check the pre-contract information you gave them at the offer stage or before is still accurate on enrolment

-difficulties will arise if you seek to change and replace pre-contract information about the educational service that was given at the offer stage.

-Much of the pre-contract information will already have been provided or made available at the offer stage and, where it is the same, this does not need to be given again on enrolment.

-re-enrolment for each year of study, where applicable, does not trigger a new contract being entered into for each year of study. The contract is for the full duration of the course with milestones to be achieved in order to progress to the next year.