

Higher Education Admissions Policy

Review

Formal Review Cycle	3 Yearly		
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Policy Owner	Group Director of Marketing and Communications		
Policy Author	Sally Dixon and Craig Millar		

Approvals

Board of Corp Y/N	Y	Committee	C&Qs	Date Board approved	04/02/2020
SLT Y/N	Y	SLT date approved	16/01/2020	Additional committee	HE

Publication

Website Y/N	Y	Intranet Y/N	Y	Student VLE Y/N	Y	Other	Student Handbook
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Change History

Version	Date Reviewed/ Revised	Description of Change	Reviewed by	Approved by

Higher Education Admissions Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy is a policy of City of Sunderland College, trading as Education Partnership North East (which includes Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form College and Northumberland College). These colleges will be referred to as “the College” throughout this document.
- 1.2. We welcome applications from all prospective students with the motivation to learn and the potential to succeed regardless of age, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, pregnancy, marital or civil partnership status, disability, sexual orientation or social background. The College is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all individuals seeking a place on a programme and is committed to providing a fair and transparent admissions procedure.
- 1.3. This policy outlines the process to be followed to ensure:
 - All applications are dealt with on an individual basis and are considered fairly
 - All potential learners will be admitted onto a programme following the principle of ‘Right Student, Right Course’

2. Scope

- 2.1. This admission policy provides the framework for admission practice for all higher education programmes defined as ‘Prescribed’ Higher Education by the Office for Students. The Policy has been developed by the Higher Education Team and reflects relevant legislation and good practice provided by higher education organisations, including the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA). The policy makes explicit the position in relation to a range of areas of admissions. These areas include: fair admissions and widening participation, the processes for handling applications from those with criminal convictions and our commitment to equity and efficiency in dealing with applications.
- 2.2. The scope of this policy is admissions to all programmes offered by the College including full and part-time further and higher education programmes. .

3. Aims of the Policy/Underpinning Principles

Aims

- 3.1. The College is committed to demonstrating sound practice in recruitment, selection and admission of students to all programmes offered by the College. The admissions process extends from pre-application stage up to and including enrolment and is crucial to establishing a positive relationship between applicants and the College. The College is committed to meeting the needs of all potential students wishing to undertake study at the College. This commitment is a key focus of the College’s Mission, Vision and Values.
- 3.2. This policy and the procedure attached have been developed with regard to the quality agenda and requirements presented by the Review of Higher Education, and are underpinned by Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education of the UK Quality Code (Quality Assurance Agency). In addition, guidance produced by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) has been used to support the development of this policy and the associated procedure.
- 3.3. The policy aims to ensure a fair, effective, efficient, centralized and coordinated admissions process for all students wishing to study at the College. We will achieve this by ensuring that:
 - 3.3.1. Applicants are treated fairly, impartially and consistently

- 3.3.2. Applicants are supported through the admissions process
- 3.3.3. Informed and sound decision making by applicants and the college is assured
- 3.3.4. National, regional and college strategic priorities are recognized
- 3.3.5. Information relating to entry criteria and programme content is up-to-date, accurate and accessible to applicants and college staff.
- 3.3.6. Safeguarding applicants interests by only accepting students who have a potential to complete the programme of study,
- 3.3.7. Complying with appropriate legislation and College policies

GENERAL STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

3.4. All applicants will be admitted onto a programme following the principle of “Right student, Right course”, provided the following criteria are met:

- 3.4.1. the applicant satisfies all pre-programme requirements, where relevant, including, completing all paperwork, attending appointments, returning requested forms on time.
- 3.4.2. the applicant meets the specific entry requirements of a programme.
- 3.4.3. the applicant meets all other admission criteria.
- 3.4.4. where applicable, the applicant has satisfactory references.
- 3.4.5. the applicant attends an interview, where required by a specific programme.
- 3.4.6. where applicable, the applicant agrees to pay any fees required (admission to the College is conditional upon the payment, or agreed arrangements for the payment, of any fees by the due date).
- 3.4.7. there are places available on the programme of study

4. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- 4.1. Those who are applying for admission to a Full-time university programme will normally do so through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Those applying to a Part-time university programme will normally do so direct to the college.
- 4.2. The process for admitting students at the College is centralised by the admissions team. in accordance with the approved Admissions Procedure.
- 4.3. Prospective applicants are advised to carefully read through the following section before submitting an application.

5. SELECTION

- 5.1. Entry requirements for each programme are set out in programme specification documentation and College advertising literature. Such entry requirements would normally show the expected number of UCAS points a student should hold. The colleges’ requirements will be published on the programme pages of the college website and the UCAS website. Applicants are advised to always check College programme pages for the most up-to-date information. Entry requirements may be changed for individual students who can demonstrate alternative qualifications, or experience that leads tutors to believe that they will be successful on the programme. Applicants may be required to provide documentation which verifies the level and grade of qualifications achieved.
- 5.2. In the event of an offer being made for a programme still in the pre-validation stage, any advertising materials and any offers will make this clear. Where a programme does not run due to the programme not being approved, or where there are significant changes to a between the offer being made and the student commencing the programme, the admissions team will advise the applicant of this and the options available to them as soon as is feasible in writing.

6. INTERVIEWS

- 6.1. In general, the College requires applicants to be interviewed; however the selection process for some programmes may require additional stages such as auditions. Interviews provide an opportunity for an applicant to demonstrate their skills and abilities, and interest in studying with the College, and are not tests. Interviews will be conducted using predefined criteria to ensure a fair and equitable experience for applicants.
- 6.2. The interview and decision-making will be consistent with the College's policy on equal opportunities. Following an interview, applicants will be notified of the outcome via UCAS Track.

7. PORTFOLIOS

- 7.1. Interviews and portfolios are a requirement for some Arts programmes such as:
 - Film & Photography
 - Game and Interactive design
 - Fashion & Textiles
 - Illustration Arts
 - Media
- 7.2. Applicants may be required to submit a portfolio as part of the selection process and attend an interview. The portfolio assessment and interview will be consistent with the College's policy on equal opportunities

8. UCAS similarity detection and suspected fraud

- 8.1. The College is notified by UCAS if their similarity detection system identifies any possible instances of plagiarism or fraud in applications made to us via UCAS. Direct undergraduate application documents submitted are also examined, and qualifications are verified with awarding bodies wherever necessary.
- 8.2. Offers of a place are conditional upon the information supplied to the College. False statements or omissions of relevant information may lead to the withdrawal of an offer or a place. It is your responsibility to ensure that the information that you provide is accurate and complete.

9. RELEVANT CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

- 9.1. In accordance with our principles, the College provides a fair and transparent decision making process for all applications, including applicants declaring a criminal conviction. Applications are subjected to the standard admissions procedures, and if it is decided to make an offer, additional steps are taken to liaise with the applicant and establish the nature of the offence, and any other action required, the college reserves the right to withdraw the offer.
- 9.2. For some programmes, disclosure is required by law, particularly for programmes in health and related areas, social work, teaching or working with children. The College will follow the procedures outlined by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in respect of the application. The decision to make an offer rests with the relevant department, in some cases before a DBS has been provided. In cases where an offer has been made, and a DBS indicates an unsuitability for the programme of study, the college reserves the right to withdraw the offer.
- 9.3. If it is discovered during the application process, that an applicant has a relevant criminal conviction that is not spent, and the box has not been ticked on the UCAS form, the College may deduce that the applicant has knowingly withheld information and the college reserves the right to withdraw the offer.
- 9.4. It is your responsibility to ensure that the information you provide is accurate, and to quickly respond to our requests for additional information in support of your application. If you do not respond to our requests, we will assume that you do not wish to progress any further, and will terminate your application.

10. DISABILITY

- 10.1. The College welcomes applications from applicants with disabilities, and complies with relevant legislation regarding disability. Applicants will be subject to standard academic selection procedures. Some students may be invited to attend an information meeting to ensure that the college can provide the required support, to indicate where any adjustments may need to be made and to discuss the capabilities required to complete the programme.
- 10.2. Early disclosure of a disability will assist the College with understanding and supporting your individual needs. It is your responsibility to ensure that you make the college aware of your disability. If during the process of your application, your personal circumstances alter, or you are affected by an injury or disability, please contact the admissions office.

11. MINORS (Under 18s)

- 11.1. The College welcomes applications from minors admitted as students. If we offer a place to an applicant who is under the age of 18 it is because the College believes that this individual has the ability, potential and intellect to successfully complete the programme offered.
- 11.2. The College does not expect to act 'in loco parentis' and the applicant will need to provide details of their legal guardian. Minors are subject to any legal age restrictions.
- 11.3. Overseas migrants who are under 18 are legally required, under the rules of the UKBA, to provide a letter of consent from their parent/legal guardian, consenting to the arrangements with regard to the migrant's application, travel, reception and care arrangements in the UK. Migrants aged 16 or 17 have the legal right to live independently in the UK, and so may make their own arrangements for accommodation. But they require the consent of their parent(s) or legal guardian to do this and (if applying from overseas) to travel to the UK.

12. NON-TRADITIONAL LEARNERS AND RETURNERS TO STUDY

- 12.1. The College welcomes the admission of non-traditional learners to the College community and the diverse range of skills and experiences that you bring with you. We will consider entry based on any previous experience under RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) or REL (Recognition of Experiential Learning). Applications should be sent to the admissions office in the first instance.

13. EXTENUATING, MITIGATING OR MEDICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 13.1. We take into account extenuating, mitigating and medical circumstances that are brought to the College's attention during the application process up until enrolment. We require a supporting statement from the academic referee, and we welcome direct communication from a senior staff member or official from a school/college or local community in support of an applicant's circumstances.

14. COMPLAINTS

- 14.1. Each application is processed in a fair and transparent way. If an applicant believes that, in the processing of their application, the actions of the college have fallen below the standard expected then an applicant may make a complaint. A complaint relates to the operation of the College's application process and/or its outcome, or the actions or behaviour of a member of staff involved in the admissions process.
- 14.2. Should an applicant wish to make a complaint/grievance, they are advised to put their complaint in writing to the Director of Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment who will acknowledge the complaint, investigate and respond on behalf of the College. Under normal circumstances, applicants should expect to have a response within 15 working days of receipt of the letter.

15. APPEALS

- 15.1. Each application is considered in accordance with our principles and offers are made based on the information provided on the application form. If an applicant believes that, in its consideration of their application, the actions of the College have fallen below the standard expected then an applicant may make an appeal. An appeal should relate to the process of decision making rather than the decision itself which is a question of academic judgment. There is no automatic right of appeal against a decision on whether or not to offer a place. If you wish to make an appeal you should refer to the Higher Education Admissions Appeals Policy.

16. Applicant feedback

- 16.1. The College is committed to providing appropriate feedback to an applicant upon written request only. The request for feedback must be received within 28 days of the College's decision. Feedback will be provided via email direct to the applicant within 10 days.
- 16.2. If an applicant wishes to make a complaint or request a review of an admissions decision after they have received feedback, this must be directed to the Director of Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the first instance.

17. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- 17.1. The entry requirements will be published on our programme pages and the UCAS website. Applicants are advised to always check the College programme pages for the most up-to-date information.
- 17.2. The College will make available entry requirements for all its programmes. All admissions decisions will be made against detailed criteria which will specify:
 - Typical academic entry requirements
 - Relevant experience and/or other qualities
 - Achievement of a specific grade in a subject
- 17.3. The College's minimum entry requirements are intended to:
 - Ensure that applicants are appropriately prepared for study in higher education
 - Draw attention to the diversity of qualifications that can prepare applicants for higher education
 - Support admissions tutors in recruiting suitably prepared students
- 17.4. **Entry to Stage 2**
 - 17.4.1. The entry requirements for stage 2 are higher than those required for entry onto stage zero or one. Evidence of the modules already taken will be requested. Where applicants fail to meet the enhanced requirements but meet the standard requirements for stage one entry, an offer will be made. Enquiries should be made to the Admissions Office in the first instance.
- 17.5. **Progression to Top-Up Year**
 - 17.5.1. Those applicants applying to top-up their Foundation Degree to the agreed top-up programme at the College, and meet the entry requirements for the specified programme, will be guaranteed an offer of a place. However, due to the availability of places this may not always be for the immediate year following the attainment of your award, and an offer will be made on the basis of first-come-first served. The offer of a deferred entry place will be valid for up to three years. Applicants are advised to take notice of the initial application deadline of 15 January.

18. ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

- 18.1. The achievement of formal qualifications is not the only way of identifying a student's potential. Admissions staff will assess the application 'holistically', taking into account skills, experience and

abilities as well as commitment and motivation to study to establish whether the applicant has the potential to benefit from the programme and graduate successfully. Experience may include knowledge or practice gained from previous work or study, voluntary or community involvement or care responsibilities. Applications will be dealt with on their individual merits.

19. Confirmation

- 19.1. Applicants who narrowly fail to satisfy the specific academic conditions of their offer come results time, may still be offered a place, subject to the overall availability of places. Applicants in the UCAS scheme are notified of their acceptance through UCAS Track.

20. Discontinued Programmes

- 20.1. If the College has cause to discontinue a programme during an admissions cycle, applicants will be notified as soon as is practicable. Further information is available the College's Terms and Conditions and Student Protection Plan

21. Responsibilities

- 21.1. The College Governors are responsible for:
- Approval of the College HE Admissions Policy
 - understanding and ensuring effective compliance of the College HE Admissions Policy
- 21.2. The College Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:
- overseeing the effective implementation of the Admissions Policy
- 21.3. Line Managers are responsible for:
- adhering to the Admissions Policy
- 21.4. Teaching staff have responsibility to:
- ensure programme information in the public domain is up-to-date and ensures the applicant can make informed decisions.
 - address and respond to any enquiries regarding the admission of a student in a timely manner
 - ensure that accurate information is available to prospective applicants about their programmes admissions procedure.
 - ensure that selection processes are followed consistently and fairly and that transparent entry requirements, both academic and non-academic, are used to underpin the judgments made during the selection process.
 - inform applicants of any obligations placed on them at the time the offer is being made.
 - inform applicants of any changes to the programme are made between the time of placing an offer and enrolment in a timely manner.
 - once an applicant has accepted a place, provide applicants with information about the arrangements for enrolment, registration, induction and orientation to the College and the programme;
 - provide feedback to an applicant who has not been offered a place on the reason why they were unsuccessful.
- 21.5. The Student Council is responsible for:
- collecting constructive feedback from students on their experiences of the admissions process in order to inform management and staff of possible improvements
- 21.6. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they:

- are familiar with the admissions process relevant to the programme they are applying for.
- adhere to the Colleges procedures associated with the admissions process;
- adhere to the obligations placed upon them at the time the offer is made;
- confirm acceptance or refusal of a place within the agreed time;
- engage fully with the induction and orientation activities delivered by the college.

22. Implementation

22.1. Definitions. The following terms used in this policy are defined as:

- *Entry Requirements* - what applicants need such as particular qualifications e.g. GCSEs prior to joining a programme
- *DBS*-particular applicants will need to have their police record checked. The Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) carries out these checks on behalf of the police.
- *IELTS Score* - The International English Language Testing System, is an international standardised test of English proficiency for non-native English language speakers. Applicants will be given a score from 1 to 9 for each part of the test – Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. The average produces the overall band score.

23. Policy Monitoring and Review

23.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years unless changes to legislation requires earlier review.

23.2. The effectiveness of this policy is reviewed through:

- Feedback from applicants on the effectiveness of the policy and procedure
- Feedback from staff on the effectiveness of the policy and procedure
- Feedback received from awarding bodies and from external review activities
- Review of applications denied admissions with a report going to SLT

24. Equality Impact Assessment

(Consider whether the policy or procedures may disproportionately impact any group.)

Have you sought consultation on this policy?				
Details:				
Could a particular group be affected (negatively or positively)?	Impact Y/N	Description of Impact	Evidence	Mitigation/Justification
Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010				
Age	Y	Students who meet entry requirements must be accepted onto a programme.		Staff training to include E&D compulsory training and refresher training. Other training programmes such as
Disability	Y			
Gender Reassignment	Y			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Y			
Pregnancy and maternity	Y	Consideration on potential impact should be given when a student does not meet the entry		
Race	Y			
Religion or belief	Y			
Sex	Y			

Sexual Orientation	Y	formal criteria and could secure a place via the non-standard entry process.		unconscious bias training should be delivered. Reports will monitor the 'rejection' of applications to ensure they are assessed and consistency applied.
Additional characteristics to consider				
Young Persons in Care & Care Leavers		As above		As above
Young Carers & Care Givers		As above		As above
Young Parents		As above		As above
Youth Offenders		As above		As above
Those Receiving Free School Meals		As above		As above
If there is no impact, please explain:				

Higher Education admissions procedure flow-chart

