



# Further Education Admissions Policy

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This policy has been reviewed in line with the Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation and Disability. We will continue to monitor this policy and to ensure that it has equal access and does not discriminate against anyone, especially any person/s listed under any protected characteristic.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This policy details the Group's approach to and arrangements for the admission of students on to further education courses and programmes.

## **2. SCOPE**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all colleges within The Bedford College Group: Bedford College, Central Bedfordshire College, National College for Motorsport, Shuttleworth College, The Bedford Sixth Form, The Corby Sixth Form and Tresham College.

## **3. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 3.1 The Bedford College Group is committed to providing its local community with a wide range of learning opportunities at different levels to facilitate access and progression. It is our policy to operate an admissions service that guides prospective students on to appropriate programmes of study and courses from which they are likely to benefit and which will enable them to succeed and progress. This is achieved through enacting the Group's values of being student-focused, working to improve continuously, being inclusive, open and caring, and nurturing educational excellence. As such, TBCG will provide an admissions service which:

- Provide impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) to help prospective students make realistic and informed decisions about their choice of learning opportunities
- Makes available clear, accessible and accurate information for each course or programme, which includes entry criteria, qualification aims, costs, study requirements, progression routes and assessment methods
- Manages applications and enrolments in a timely and efficient manner, with high levels of customer service
- Ensures that the admissions process does not disadvantage applicants by discriminating on any grounds, such as age, disability, gender (legal sex) and gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation and gender reassignment
- Makes reasonable adjustments to facilitate access to courses and programmes for people with disabilities
- Provides information and advice on college facilities and support services
- Ensures applicants are notified of the reason where admission to their chosen course or programme is declined
- Provides applicants with information on alternative opportunities, including those offered by other providers where we are unable to meet their needs
- Treats applicants with courtesy and respect at all times.

## **4. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

- 4.1 The College will ensure that prospective students receive information, advice and guidance from the Customer Contact team & Admissions team and/or Course Tutors

in order to help them decide on the course of study that best meets their needs and aspirations.

- 4.2 The College is committed to providing the highest quality of information, advice and guidance (IAG). Staff within the Customer Contact & Admissions team hold, or are working towards, professional IAG qualifications and, along with the Student Services team, have been accredited the Matrix standard in recognition of our commitment to providing high quality impartial information, advice and guidance.

## **5. ENTRY CRITERIA AND CONDITION OF ENTRY**

- 5.1 Information about each course, along with its entry requirements, can be found on the Group's official websites.
- 5.2 The minimum age for entry on to our courses is 16 years old (as of 31<sup>st</sup> August of the year the course starts).
- 5.3 Existing college students wishing to apply for the next level full-time course can do so under the College's Progression Policy. See our Progression Policies on our website for more details.
- 5.4 Full-time applicants under the age of 19 who have not achieved a grade 9-4 in their GCSE English and maths examinations will be required to work towards attaining these. This is a mandatory requirement and a condition of study. It could be GCSE or Functional Skills depending on their entry grade. Applicants who have achieved a grade 9-4 in both GCSEs will be required to continue to develop their English and maths skills.
- 5.5 Full-time applicants who do not have any prior qualifications and/or do not meet the minimum entry requirements for our Level 1 programmes can still apply and will be referred for information, advice and guidance for a suitable course.

## **6. MAKING AN APPLICATION**

- 6.1 Applicants can apply online via the Group's official college websites.
- 6.2 Applications made online will be acknowledged by return. We will communicate primarily by email using the email address provided on the application form. We will also use text messaging and WhatsApp messaging to remind applicants about important dates and events.
- 6.3 If applicants are aged under 19, we will also communicate with the parent/carer regarding the application, using the information provided in the emergency contact section of the application form.
- 6.4 If an applicant for a full-time programme declares on their application form that they have an EHCP, the application will be placed on hold until the Additional Learning Support department has undertaken a review and confirms that the College can

support the applicant's needs. The application will then be taken off hold and processed as usual.

- 6.5 If an applicant for a full-time programme declares on the application form that they have a learning difficulty, disability or support need, the applicant will receive an email from our Additional Learning Support department to introduce our additional support services and explain how to contact them for support and advice.

## **7. SELECTION PROCESS**

- 7.1 For the majority of full-time programmes and substantial part-time courses, applicants will be invited to attend a guidance interview or review meeting.
- 7.2 Applicants usually receive an invitation to the interview/meeting within one week of the application being received. The interview/meeting usually takes place within four weeks of the application being received.
- 7.3 The interview/IAG session provides an opportunity for the applicant to ask questions and obtain more detailed information about the course and College. It also helps staff assess the suitability of the applicant and at what level they should start at. Sometimes applicants will need to take part in practical skills tests as part of the guidance interview, for example auditions and presenting portfolio of works. The format varies according to the course applied for and will be clearly detailed in the invitation communication. For full-time programmes, interviews/IAG sessions will be either face-to-face or online and take place after 4.00pm during term-time to fit around school hours.
- 7.4 If an applicant has declared a learning difficulty, disability or support need, a member of the Additional Learning Support department may be invited to attend the interview.
- 7.5 If an applicant does not attend their interview/meeting and does not notify the College, we reserve the right to withdraw the application.

## **8. OFFERING A PLACE ON A COURSE**

- 8.1 Where applicants attend a guidance interview for a full-time programme or part-time courses, a verbal offer will usually be made as part of the interview. A formal offer will usually be made within one week of the interview.
- 8.2 Applicants will receive an email with their formal offer, which they will need to accept or decline within two weeks. A course offer may be conditional, which means a place has been offered provided that the applicant can meet certain conditions. Conditions will normally relate to qualifications that the applicant is required to pass (including specific grades required). Any conditions relating to the offer will be detailed in the applicant's formal offer communication.

8.3 If it is not possible to offer an applicant a place on their chosen programme, or course, the applicant will be offered another course, careers interview and/or referred to another provider where practicable.

## 9. **PREPARING TO START THE COLLEGE**

9.1 All new full-time students are expected to attend our Discovery Day in June/July. The day is designed to introduce them to the College, the course and their fellow students, and ease the transition to post-16 learning.

9.2 Applicants on full-time courses will be invited to an enrolment event, and will receive other information they might need, such as fees payable. They will then be invited to attend an induction in September where they will receive their full study programme timetable.

9.3 Applicants accepted on to a part-time course can enrol at any time from May.

## 10. **COURSE CLOSURE**

10.1 In the exceptional circumstance that a course is oversubscribed and a limit on numbers has been approved by the Principal and Group Head of Customer Contact & Admissions, places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis and a waiting list will be maintained. Should more places become available, we will notify applicants on the waiting list. Applicants who have accepted an offer prior to the approved closure, and meet the conditions of their offer, will have their enrolment honoured.

10.2 In the unlikely event a course is not viable due to, for example, low numbers that would have an adverse effect on the student experience or where there has been a significant change to government funding, the College reserves the right to withdraw the course (including after an offer has been made or accepted), subject to approval by the Principal. In such cases, applicants will be offered advice and guidance on the availability of alternative courses, both at the College and with other suitable alternative providers.

## 11. **DISCLOSING A CRIMINAL CONVICTION**

11.1 We have a duty of care under our safeguarding and prevent commitments to make every effort to ensure that applicants who might pose a risk to other college users are not admitted on to our courses, and have procedures in place to do this. The procedures were developed in consultation with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Nacro).

11.2 Applicants are asked on the application form to declare any unspent criminal convictions. They are also assured that this declaration will not necessarily be a bar to them joining the College. Convictions which would give rise to particular concern are those for offences against a person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, convictions involving unlawful supplying or possession of controlled drugs or substances, and theft. Convictions that are spent (as defined by the Rehabilitation of

Offenders Act 1974, and reformed under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012) do not need to be disclosed. However, applicants for courses involving working with children or vulnerable adults or other external placements are required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

11.3 Applicants with unspent criminal convictions will need to attend a meeting with the Group Head of Customer Contact & Admissions (or a delegated representative) to undertake a risk assessment. The risk assessment is then reviewed by a panel, and the outcome communicated to the applicant. See our Applicants Disclosing a Criminal Convictions Policy on our website for more details.

## 12. **APPLICANTS WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO THE COLLEGE'S DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

12.1 Where an applicant has previously studied at the College and has been excluded, they will not be able to re-apply for courses at the College for 12 months unless approved by the principle.

## 13. **APPLICANTS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT NEEDS**

13.1 The College welcomes applications from people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

13.2 Where a full-time applicant is identified as declaring a disability or difficulty which may impact on their learning, they will be followed up by the College's Additional Learning Support department.

13.3 The Additional Learning Support department will provide:

- Support for applicants at guidance interviews as required by the applicant
- Support to ensure that applicants are able to access College support services.

13.4 The College works closely with Local Education Authorities in order to meet legal requirements under the Children & Families Act 2014 in respect of:

- Duty to admit students if the institution is named in an EHCP plan and able to meet need
- Duty to co-operate with the local authority to identify and meet the needs of young people with SEN. This is a reciprocal duty, meaning that the local authority must also co-operate with colleges to ensure young people's needs are met.

## 14. **NON-UK NATIONAL STUDENTS AND UK NATIONALS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN RESIDENT IN THE UK FOR THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS ON THE FIRST DAY OF LEARNING**

14.1 The College does not currently hold a Tier 4 Border Agency Licence to enable us to accept applicants from overseas. Exceptions to the above are applicants with the following residency status:

- EEA and Swiss nationals with either pre-settled or settled status who have lived in the EEA, Switzerland, Gibraltar or UK for at least three years on the first day of learning
- UK nationals who have not been resident in the UK for the previous three years but have been an ordinarily resident in the UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands or Isle of Man for the previous three years on the first day of learning
- Irish citizens in the UK or Republic of Ireland who have been an ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands and/or Republic of Ireland for the previous three years on the first day of learning
- Non-UK nationals eligible without meeting three year residency requirement are those individuals with:
  - discretionary leave to enter or remain
  - exceptional leave to enter or remain
  - indefinite leave to enter or remain
  - humanitarian protection
  - refugee status
  - leave outside the rules
  - persons granted leave under one of the Ukraine schemes:
    - individuals with leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme
    - individuals with leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)
    - individuals with leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Ukraine Extension Scheme
    - the husband, wife, civil partner or child of anyone in the first 7 bullet points of this list.
- Persons granted leave under one of the Afghan schemes:
  - indefinite leave to enter or remain
  - individuals with leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)
  - individuals with leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). Some individuals with this leave to enter or remain may have the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (ALES) ex-gratia scheme (see below) listed on their biometric residence permit. They should be able to provide other documentation detailing that their leave is under ARAP
  - British Nationals evacuated from Afghanistan under Operation Pitting
  - British Nationals evacuated from Afghanistan by the UK government before 6 January 2022
  - Persons granted leave under the ALES ex-gratia scheme must meet the 3 year ordinary residence requirements, and are **not exempt**.

14.2 Asylum seekers are eligible to receive funding if they:

- Have lived in the UK for six months or longer while their claim is being considered by the Home Office, and no decision on their claim has been made, or
- Are receiving local authority support under section 23C or section 23CA of the Children Act 1989 or the Care Act 2014.

14.3 An individual who has been refused asylum will be eligible if:

- They have appealed against a decision made by the UK government against granting refugee status and no decision has been made within six months of lodging the appeal, or
- They are granted support for themselves under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, or
- Are receiving local authority support for themselves under section 23C or section 23CA of the Children Act 1989.

14.4 Applicants will be asked to provide supporting evidence regarding proof of residency which allows them to be eligible for funding.

14.5 **Students Aged 16-18 with legal entitlement to abode in the UK, but whose entitlement has an end date prior to planned end date of Course. *NB: This guidance is not the same for applicants aged 19+ where the rules are strictly applied***

14.6 For applicants aged 16 -18 as of 31<sup>st</sup> August in the academic year that their course starts, so long as the following two points also apply, The Bedford College Group will proceed with their application and assume that any application for extension to their visa will be made timely and is in all likelihood going to be granted.

- Their immigration status can be evidenced to show they are living in the UK legally at the time of application e.g. VISA, Ukraine Scheme etc and the expiry date has not already passed.
- The legal documentation will be valid on the start date of their course i.e. the expiry date is in the future. This would also include evidence of an application for an extension to a visa.

14.7 This policy will also apply to applicants where they apply to two year study programmes and their current documentation/evidence expires during that period.

## **15. RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION TO THE COLLEGE**

15.1 Under certain circumstances the College may reserve the right to refuse an application or enrolment, or withdraw an offer. Applicants who fall into this category will be given full consideration before any such refusal or withdrawal.

15.2 The College reserves the right to refuse admission to any applicant:

- Who has disclosed a criminal conviction which is either not spent or can never become spent and which the College believes represents an unacceptable risk to students and/or staff
- Who has previously been excluded from one of the Group's colleges or another educational institution. Before any such decision is made, reasonable effort will be made to obtain references from previous educational and other institution(s) and, where provided, references will support any decision
- Who has previously attended this or another education institution and not completed courses, including all external assessments, without good reason



- Who has previously been subject to the College’s disciplinary procedure and has not followed the recommendations following the outcome of any such disciplinary
- Who is identified as being a threat or danger to themselves or others in the College environment in relation to the College’s duty of care to staff and students. See our Fitness to Study Policy.
- Where the College has been notified by the police that the applicant presents an unacceptable risk
- Has outstanding debts with the College
- Has provided false or misleading information on an application or enrolment form.

15.3 The above list is indicative, and is neither exhaustive or exclusive. The College reserves the right to make the final decision on whether or not to accept an application or enrolment to the College. Any such decision will be made by a Principals, Vice Principal or the Director of Student Services.

## **16. COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICANTS**

16.1 Details on the information we collect about applicants can be found in our Data Privacy Policy which sets out what we do with applicants’ information and what we do to keep it secure. It also explains where and how we collect applicants’ personal information, as well as their rights over the personal information we hold about them.

## **17. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

17.1 If an applicant feels that the process has not been followed, or the decision reached by the College is unfair or incorrect, they have the right to appeal or complain. This can be done by visiting [Complaints and Feedback | The Bedford College Group | Complaints Procedure](#)

17.2 Our Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Handling Policy & Procedure is designed to ensure that your complaint is dealt with promptly and effectively. A copy can be obtained from [Complaints and Feedback | The Bedford College Group | Complaints Procedure](#), by emailing [complaints@bedford.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@bedford.ac.uk) or by writing to the Customer Feedback Manager, The Bedford College Group, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AH.

17.3 After exhausting the Group’s internal complaints procedure, if you are still dissatisfied with the outcome you can complain to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (the government agency responsible for overseeing the performance of further education colleges). Further details on how to contact them can be found in our Complaints Policy.

## **18. RESPONSIBILITIES**

18.1 The Executive lead for student recruitment is the Executive Director of Marketing, Communications & Student Recruitment.

18.2 The Group Head of Customer Contact & Admissions has the overall accountability for setting and implementing the Further Education Admissions Policy.

18.3 The Principals and Vice Principals are responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to within their colleges.

18.4 Interviews for full-time and substantive/ specified part-time courses are the responsibility of the relevant Heads of Department.

18.5 Supporting applicants with additional learning support needs is the responsibility of Additional Learning Support department.

## **19. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

19.1 The implementation of the admissions policy is monitored through:

- Assessment under the Matrix quality standard
- Customer feedback
- Statement of Service
- Analysis of performance recorded on Enquiries & Admissions system
- College self-assessment process
- Equality impact assessment.

## **20. SUPPORTING POLICIES**

The following College policies are relevant to the application of this policy:

- Dealing with Disclosure of Unspent Criminal Convictions Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Student Progression (Full-Time FE) Policy
- Data Privacy Policy.