

Higher Skills Admissions Policy

This policy applies to Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), University Awards and programmes which include professionally accredited programmes at Level 4 and above, such as CIPD, CIM, CMI and AAT.

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Author	Amy Cleary
Directorate / Department	Customer Contact & Admissions
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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.

Admissions Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy details the Group's approach to and the arrangements for the admission of students on to higher skills courses.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This policy relates to The Bedford College Group's colleges that offer higher skills courses, which are Bedford College, Central Bedfordshire College, Shuttleworth College and Tresham College.

2.2 This policy applies to our prescribed and non-prescribed Higher Skills courses, as listed in our undergraduate course prospectus and on our websites.

2.3 Regulated Higher Education is defined as a course that are directly funded to the College by the Office for Students (OfS) and the Student Loans Company (SLC). These programmes include Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) and University Awards.

2.4 Non-Regulated Higher Education is defined as courses that are not funded by the OfS and SLC. These programmes include professionally accredited programmes at Level 4 and above, such as CIPD, CIM, CMI and AAT.

2.5 Higher apprenticeships offered by TBCG are excluded from this scope. The admissions process for higher skills apprenticeships complies with IFATE and ESFA regulations. Further details are available in the *Employer Guide to Apprenticeships*, which can be accessed on the college website via the following link: [Apprenticeships with The Bedford College Group](#)

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 The Bedford College Group is committed to providing its local communities with a wide range of learning opportunities at different levels to facilitate access and progression.

3.2 It is our policy to operate a fair and transparent admissions service that guides prospective students on to appropriate programmes of study and courses so that they can succeed.

4. THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

4.1 This policy has been developed taking into account:

- OfS Regulatory Framework for Higher Education (Sections A and C1)
- Competitions & Market Authority's (CMA) Consumer Protection Law
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Admissions, Recruitment & Widening Access) published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

- UCAS Guidance for Admissions.

5. POLICY AIMS

- 5.1 It is the aim of The Bedford College Group to ensure the admissions procedures are designed to:
- Provide impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) to help prospective students make realistic and informed decisions about their choice of learning opportunities
 - Make 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
 - Manage applications and enrolments in a timely and efficient manner, with high levels of customer service
 - Ensure that the admissions procedures do 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
 - Make reasonable adjustments to facilitate access to learning programmes for people with disabilities
 - Provide information and advice on college facilities and support services
 - Undertake best endeavours to maintain a safe college environment for all our students, staff and visitors
 - Ensure prospective students receive a student contract that is transparent and has fair terms and conditions
 - Ensure applicants are notified of the reason where admission to their chosen course is declined
 - Provide applicants with information on alternative opportunities, including those offered by other providers, where we are unable to meet their needs
 - Treat applicants with courtesy and respect at all times
 - Provide information, advice and guidance services which continue to meet the standards of the Matrix quality mark
 - Ensure that complaint handling practices are clear, accessible and fair.

6. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

- 6.1 The College will ensure that prospective students have access to information, advice and guidance from the Customer Contact team and/or Course Tutors in order to help them decide on the course of study that best meets their needs and aspirations.
- 6.2 The College is committed to providing the highest quality of information, advice and guidance (IAG). Staff within the Customer Contact team hold, or are working towards, professional IAG qualifications, and the College's Customer Contacts & Admissions and Student Services teams have been accredited the Matrix standard in recognition of our commitment to providing high quality impartial information, advice and guidance.

7. ENTRY CRITERIA AND CONDITION OF ENTRY

- 7.1 Information about each course, along with its entry requirements, can be found on the College website.
- 7.2 Existing college students studying at Level 3 and wishing to apply for a higher education course can do so under the College's Progression Guarantee. See Higher Education Progression Policy on our website for more details.

8. MAKING AN APPLICATION

- 8.1 Information on how to apply can be found against the course details on the Group website.
- 8.2 For full-time courses, applicants are required to apply through UCAS by the published deadlines. Detailed information on how and when to apply can be found at www.ucas.com. Applications made via this method will be acknowledged by the College on receipt. Alternatively, if the Group is the only provider being applied to then the applicant can apply through the website and we will add to UCAS on their behalf.
- 8.3 For part-time courses, applicants are required to apply directly to the College via the website. Applications can be made from October (for courses starting the following year), and will be acknowledged by return by email.
- 8.4 For internal applicants (those currently studying at one of our colleges), see our Higher Education Progression Policy on our website for more details.

9. SELECTION PROCESS

- 9.1 For the majority of courses, applicants will be offered a place based on meeting the entry qualifications for the course. Mature applicants without the entry qualifications but with relevant work experience, and all applicants applying for an Art & Design, Performing Arts, Music, Media, Engineering, Construction or Teacher Education course, will be required to attend a guidance interview and/or assessment.
- 9.2 Applicants will usually receive an invitation to the interview within one week of the application being received. The interview usually takes place within four weeks of the application being received.
- 9.3 The interview provides an opportunity for the applicant to ask questions and obtain more detailed information about the course and College to ensure it meets their expectations. 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 activities as part of the 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.
- 9.4 If an applicant has declared a learning difficulty, disability or support need, adjustments will be made to accommodate the applicant at the interview.
- 9.5 If an applicant does not attend their interview and doesn't notify the College, we reserve the right to withdraw the application.

10. OFFERING A PLACE ON A COURSE

- 10.1 A formal offer will usually be made within one week of receiving the application or, where an interview/assessment is required, within one week of the interview.
- 10.2 Applicants attending an interview and/or assessment will usually also receive a verbal offer as part of the interview.
- 10.3 Applicants will receive an offer letter by email which will include a link to accept or decline the offer within two weeks.
- 10.4 For full-time courses, the offer will also appear in applicant's UCAS account, which applicants will need to update with their decision.
- 10.5 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 applicants' formal offer communication.
- 10.6 If it is not possible to offer an applicant a place on the course, the applicant will be offered an alternative course, a careers interview and/or referred to another provider where practicable.
- 10.7 All successful applicants will receive pre-contract information with their offer. This includes the modules/units applicants will study as part of their course, method of assessment, number of contact hours for teaching, expected self-study requirements, course costs, payment terms, any additional costs such as materials and excursions, and terms and conditions.

11. PREPARING TO START YOUR COURSE

- 11.1 Applicants accepted on to a full-time course will receive information about their enrolment by July. Applicants will need to complete part of their enrolment online and then will be invited to attend an in-person enrolment event.
- 11.2 At this event, applicants will receive their induction timetable. Applicants will also be asked to pay for their course, if they are funding the course themselves, or provide evidence of their student loan or commitment from their employer. More information on paying for higher skills courses can be found on our website.

12. COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE PROCESS

- 12.1 We will communicate primarily by email using the email address provided on the application form. We will also use text messaging and/or WhatsApp messaging to remind applicants about important dates and events. Communication will include:
- Acknowledgement of your application
 - Confirmation of the outcome of your application – unconditional offer, conditional offer or no offer – and what you need to do next
 - Pre-contract information

- Confirmation of meeting the terms of any conditional offer of entry
- Enrolment information.

13. COURSE CLOSURE

- 13.1 In the event that a course is oversubscribed and a limit on numbers has been approved by the Senior Management Team, places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.
- 13.2 In addition, the regulatory body can impose number controls and this can also lead to a limit or closure of courses.

14. DISCLOSING A CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

- 14.1 The College has a duty of care under our safeguarding procedures and Prevent Strategy 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 Nacro.
- 14.2 Applicants are asked during the recruitment process, at either application or offer stage, to declare any unspent criminal convictions. They are also assured that this declaration will not necessarily be a bar to them joining the College.
- 14.3 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 are required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- 14.4 Applicants with unspent criminal convictions will need to attend a meeting with the Group Head of Enquiries & Admissions to undertake a risk assessment. The risk assessment is then reviewed by a panel, and the outcome communicated to the applicant.
- 14.5 See the Group's 'Dealing with Disclosure of Unspent Convictions Policy' on the College's website for more details.

15. APPLICANTS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT NEEDS

- 15.1 The College welcomes applications from people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Where an applicant is identified as declaring a disability or difficulty which may impact on their learning, they will need to contact the College's Additional Support Team. Applicants should also seek advice from Disabled Students Allowance for extra support during their course.
- 15.2 The Additional Support team will provide:

- Support and guidance in applying for a Disabled Student Allowance should they require additional learning support on their course
- A support interview to produce an Individual Support Plan to inform the lecturers of student's additional needs and exam arrangements to ensure students have access arrangements during their exams if applicable.

16. NON-UK NATIONAL OR IRISH CITIZEN STUDENTS (OR EEA STUDENTS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN RESIDENT IN THE EU FOR THREE YEARS OR MORE)

16.1 The College does not currently hold a Tier 4 Border Agency Licence and therefore only accepts applications from EEA residents or those who have lived in the EEA for more than three years. Applicants will be asked to provide supporting evidence regarding proof of residency which allows them to be eligible for funding.

17. RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION TO THE COLLEGE

17.1 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.

17.2 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 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 on our websites.
- 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.

17.3 The above list is indicative and is not exhaustive or exclusive. The College reserves the right to make the final decision on whether to accept an application or enrolment to the College. Any such decision will be made by a Vice Principal or the Group Director of Student Services.

18. COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICANTS

18.1 Details on the information we collect about applicants can be found in our Data Privacy Policy on our website, 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. It also explains how we use your data as part of our statutory duties with JISC and the Office for Students.

19. REQUESTING FEEDBACK

19.1 We feel it is important that unsuccessful applicants have the opportunity to receive feedback on their application. This can be done on request by contacting our Admissions Team.

20. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

20.1 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 the College [website](#).

20.2 The 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 the downloads section of the College website <https://bedfordcollegegroup.ac.uk/about/policies-procedures> , by emailing complaints@bedford.ac.uk or by writing to the Customer Feedback Manager, The Bedford College Group, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AH.

20.3 For regulated courses, and after exhausting the Group's internal complaints procedure, if you are still dissatisfied with the outcome you can complain to the [Office for the Independent Adjudicator](#). Further details on how to contact them can be found in our Complaints Policy.

20.4 For non-regulated courses, and after exhausting the Group's internal complaints procedure, if you are still dissatisfied with the outcome you can complain to the Department for Education (DfE). Further details on how to contact them can be found in our Complaints Policy.

21. RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

21.3 Interviews, where required, for higher skills courses are the responsibility of the relevant Heads of Department.

21.4 Where applicants are unsuccessful in obtaining a place on a course, these will be referred to the Head of Customer Contact & Admissions to review.

22. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

22.1 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 ProSolutions
- Observation of admissions interviews and related activity
- College self-assessment process
- Equality impact analysis.

23. SUPPORTING POLICIES

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

Document	Owner
Data Privacy Policy	Group Director of College Information Services
Dealing with Disclosure of Unspent Convictions Policy	Group Head of Customer Contact & Admissions
Equality & Diversity Policy	Group Head of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging
Fitness to Study Policy	Group Director of Student Services
Full-Time Student Progression to Higher Education Policy	Group Director of Higher Skills
Complaints Policy	Customer Feedback Manager